

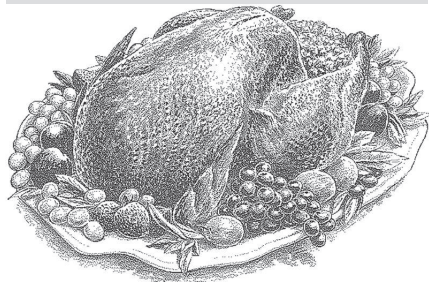


VOLUME 65 No 9

Official Publication of Branch Nine, NALC

November 2013

During this holiday season, let's not forget to give thanks for the many blessings we enjoy because of the sacrifices our veterans have made.



The Branch 9 E- Board would like to say **HAPPY THANKSGIVING** to all Branch 9 members and their families. We hope that you all have a happy and safe holiday season.

No Penalty Overtime Exclusion Begins:
November 30, 2013
Ends:
December 27, 2013

NALC Health Benefit Plan



Open Season

November 11 - December 9

Let's talk turkey about the benefits of the NALC Health Plan.

- It's the only health plan run by letter carriers as a not-for-profit plan.
- The High Option Plan pays for a wide range of preventative care.
- The plan has two new options to offer.
- The Value Option Plan offers a personal care account for enrollee.
- The consumer-Driven Health Plan (CDHP).
- All Three Plans include 100% of preventative care.
- Both Value Option and CDHP offer a personal care account.
- Personal care account helps control your medical costs.
- All three Plans partner with Cigna Health Care.
- Cigna gives members access to its Open Access Plus PPO Network.
- Cigna offers access to more than 67,800 in-network pharmacies.

Dare to Compare Health Plans.

NALC rates are on page 6



From the Editor

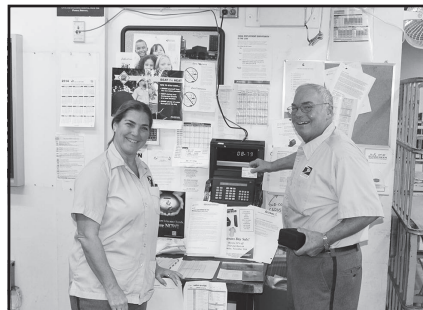


Burnsville Union Steward, Connie Beissel, along with Branch 9 Officers, Darrell Maus and Mike Zagaros make sure that Chuck Glover closes out his postal career in style.

A Cribbage Tournament between Branch 9 and Branch 28 was held on Tuesday, November 12th in St. Paul.



Flanked by Stewards, Robin Nelson and Rich Hage, Susan Hoban makes that final clockring at Eastside.



Loring Steward Karen Pederson with new retiree Mike Ashton are all smiles as he makes his last punch.



Congratulations to the four new retirees (Front L-R) Jim Hill, Larry Mellom, Joe Sadowski, and Jim Grange. From their fellow Diamond Lake carriers, friends and Branch 9.

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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 2nd Friday 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

Delivery After Dark

With Day Light Savings Time here and the seasonal shorting of daylight hours, letter carriers are once again dealing with delivering mail after dark.

There is no blanket policy regarding Delivery after Dark because the issue to contend with is whether a particular carrier on a particular route can SAFELY deliver the mail. Bottom line, each carrier must weigh their individual circumstances about the type of delivery to be carried (door to door, walking, mounted, apartments, cluster boxes, etc.), their surroundings (unfamiliar, high crime, steps, animals and hills, etc.) and their experiences in attempting to make after dark deliveries.

Some mail delivery may not be able to be made safely after daylight hours. Most apartments have lighted entryways and don't present the safety hazards that walking on uneven terrain, up and down stairs, going door to door and being exposed to the elements would. Because carriers have the most experience and the best knowledge of what is safe or unsafe in the performance of their duties, and because they are often times held responsible for accidents and injuries that might occur while completing those duties, only the carrier, can make the decision on whether delivering after dark can be done safely.

So, if presented with a situation where you believe you'll be out delivering mail after dark, **REMEMBER THAT YOU DO HAVE RIGHTS**, and follow these instructions:

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 A FORM 3996-HELP SLIP.**

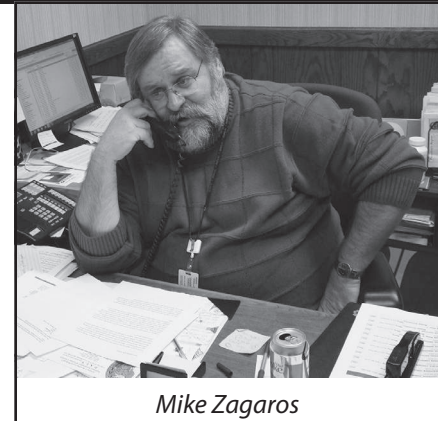
Notify your supervisor prior to heading out to the street that you may not be able to complete your duties on the street by dark.

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.

Assuming no help arrives and you are faced with darkening conditions, attempt to continue. 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.

COMPLETE FORM 1571-Curtailed 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 could also request a Form 1767-Notice of Hazardous Working Condition.** This will help you document the safety hazards you encountered while attempting delivery after dark.

It is important to note that these instructions are not intended to endorse or encourage the



Mike Zagaros

unnecessary curtailment of any mail. It is about each carrier's safety and the protection of the mail in our charge.

This is also not a blanket policy or approach. It very simply is the responsibility of each carrier to measure their safety and ensure that they are working safely. PERIOD.

Nov. 15, 2013 - Statement by Fredric Rolando, President of the National Association of Letter Carriers:

The USPS today reported an operating profit of \$600 million for fiscal 2013, but a net loss of \$5 billion due to the 2006 congressional mandate to massively pre-fund future retiree health benefits. This mandate - a political requirement placed on no other agency or company in the country - cost \$5.6 billion.

That means the Postal Service, which doesn't get a dime of taxpayer money, earned a profit of \$600 million delivering the mail. In 2012, the agency reported an operating loss of \$4.8 billion and a total loss of \$15.9 billion due to a pre-funding expense of \$11.1 billion.

2013 Minnesota State Association of Letter Carriers Convention

The Minnesota State Association of Letter Carriers (MSALC) has been tasked by NALC President Fred Rolando to concentrate on the politics that affect letter carrier careers. Each year, the MSALC has a convention at Rutgers Lodge in Deerwood, MN to train and educate carriers from around the state on the current political climate, and how to communicate with local and national politicians, to favor letter carrier issues.

Erin Murphy (DFL) Majority Speaker, Minnesota House of Representatives was the first speaker on Monday morning giving a little background on her upbringing and how she became involved in politics. Her father is a United Auto Worker, and as a young girl, listened while her family talked politics while playing euker. Ms. Murphy became a registered nurse, rising to become Vice President of the Minnesota Nurses Association. Ms. Murphy said, as the main part of her talk, that Minnesota citizens do value a strong middle class and want continued 6-day mail delivery.

Each year, State Convention attendance fluctuates, but recently there has been an over-all decline by delegates, which begs for two questions:

1. What would it take to get you interested in participating in the MSALC?
2. How can we attract newer carriers to attend a MSALC Convention?



Representative Erin Murphy (DFL), Majority Speaker, MN House of Representative with Lisa O'Neill, President, MSALC



Carriers from the affected Branches lit candles to commemorate the passing of active and retired letter carriers during a memorial service.



MSALC stood solemnly while names of departed active and retired letter carriers were read.

MDA Fundraiser: Putting Contest



Darrell Maus



Mike Smith (Richfield)



Kieran Hughes (Minnehaha), winner of the MDA Golf Tourney.

Executive Vice President's Report

LEGISLATIVE RESPONSIBILITY (OR LACK OF)

In recent months our union's focus has been almost completely on politics. Our pleas for action have been constant, from writing letters and making phone calls to your legislators to staying informed on current Postal Reform issues.

First, ensuring the restructuring (reduction) of the pre-funding payments obviously allow for more money to remain in the Postal Services' pocket! This would allow the USPS to initiate and be more aggressive in the selling of new products and services, which also helps to make a positive impression on the public. We need every USPS carrier and customer to be aware and contact their legislator with concerns as Postal Reform moves through Congress in the coming months.

WHAT DO I SAY?

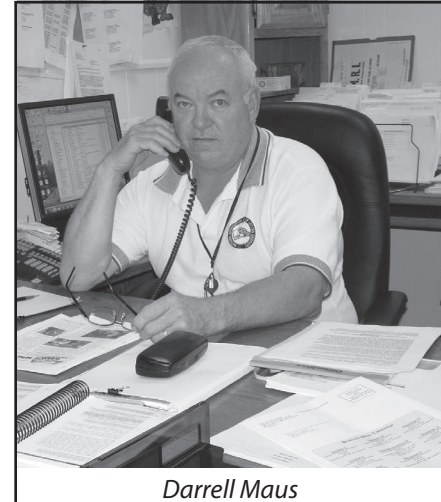
Carriers understand that the future of the USPS, and our livelihood are at stake. Carriers agree that change is not only needed, but absolutely inevitable. Congress created this problem, Congress needs to fix it. Our current problem is that most carriers aren't quite sure what to say/write when communicating with their representatives or senators. Some branches have in the past provided form letters that are basically "fill in the blank" style. Although they are easy to do, they don't really convince your legislator that you're all that concerned or informed. A personalized letter is best because it actually requires someone to

read it, not just count it. It will be more unique, and that you, as its author, are informed and specifically concerned about these issues as a voter and constituent. Bottom line, it's more real. It doesn't have to be lengthy, technical or worthy of a prize from your grammar teacher. Whether it be hand written, typed, or an email, they pretty much count as the same thing. I think it's important to send a letter by regular mail, as that happens to be the institution we're trying to save! And it's as easy as a few clicks of the keys to send that same letter as an attachment to an email to any legislator.

Here are some tips for your letter:

Identify yourself first, as a registered voter and resident in their District/State. This will help to drive home the message that you're one of the votes they'll be attempting to sway during the next election. You will also want to tell them that you're a letter carrier with the USPS.

List your concerns, you don't have to be scientific or lengthy, just describe your situation and concerns. Refrain from broad generic statements like "Save the Post Office" but rather be specific like 5-day delivery will be financially damaging to the service and it's business growth. Then on a personal note you can refer to benefit changes or that letting Congress be involved with your Collective Bargaining rights and how that will affect your personal lives and the hardships your family



Darrell Maus

will have to endure. The Union has several sources of material, like the Postal Record, Branch Nine News, and MSALC publications that provide all the subject matter you'll need! You simply personalize it to how it will affect you.

Refer to the Bill Number, if available. Every bill has a number which identifies it in either the House (number starts with "H") or Senate (number starts with "S"). This will clarify your area of concern with the bill they'll eventually be voting on. Again these will be in the publications I listed earlier with information of what's in the bill and how it affects postal issues.

Ask them to contact you, don't be expecting a phone call directly from your congressman/representative but you may receive a call or return letter/email from one of their staffers, acknowledging your letter or email and telling you the representatives position (if they have one). This lets them know you're more than casually interested and helps them to know their actions will be accountable to their constituents.

VP Article continued on page 10

When is Health Benefits Open Season?

Monday, November 11, 2013 - Monday, December 9, 2013.

Update provided by NALC Health Benefits Rep. Julie Waldemar



Each year, Open Season runs from the Monday of the second full workweek in November through the Monday of the second full workweek in December.

I say – try and make your decision (and make any changes) ASAP or at least by the Thursday (Dec 5th) before the actual deadline. Why? Because if you have problems you still have time to try again – don't get caught not having the insurance you want next year.

Choosing a health insurance plan is a big decision. You want to choose a plan that best fits your/your family's needs.

For 2014, the **NALC Health Benefit Plan** will offer our **High Option Plan**. In addition, we will offer two new plans: the **Consumer Driven Health Plan (CDHP)** and the **Value Option Plan**.

The NALC Health Benefit Plan High Option is the same great Plan we have offered for over 60 years. It provides our members accessibility to quality medical care while maintaining a comprehensive benefit package. We pride ourselves in offering excellent benefits with affordable premiums. Remember we are Union Owned, Union Operated and are a Not-for-Profit Plan.

The **CDHP** and **Value Option** focus on you, the health care consumer, and give you greater control in how you use your health care dollars. When the *2014 Brochure comes out you can see what each plan covers.

You add it up: Quality plus affordability plus over 60 years of service equals the NALC Health Benefit Plan.

****NALC Plan 2014 rates:**

Type of Enrollment	Enrollment Code	Non-Postal Premium				Postal Premium		
		Biweekly		Monthly		Biweekly		
		Gov't Share	Your Share	Gov't Share	Your Share	Category 1 Your Share	Category 2 Your Share	NALC Your Share
High Option Self Only	321	\$196.68	\$74.41	\$426.14	\$161.22	\$52.55	\$66.21	\$58.02
High Option Self and Family	322	\$437.62	\$151.05	\$948.18	\$327.27	\$102.43	\$132.82	\$114.59
CDHP Self Only	324	\$144.75	\$48.25	\$313.63	\$104.54	\$31.84	\$41.98	\$36.19
CDHP Self and Family	325	\$314.31	\$104.77	\$681.01	\$227.00	\$69.15	\$91.15	\$78.58
Value Option Self Only	KM1	\$124.63	\$41.54	\$270.03	\$90.01	\$27.42	\$36.14	\$31.16
Value Option Self and Family	KM2	\$270.64	\$90.21	\$586.38	\$195.46	\$59.54	\$78.48	\$67.66

***The 2014 Official Brochure will be available at NALC.org or OPM.gov soon.** The Office of Personnel Management (OPM) has issued a "Going Green" mandate to **all** Federal Employees Health Benefit Plans instructing them to reduce their use of paper by offering an electronic version of the Plan's yearly brochure. We are complying with this mandate by giving our members the choice to receive the Plan brochure by paper or by retrieving it from the Plan's website.

****Call the Plan toll free at 1-888-636-NALC if you have questions about your rates.**

Annual Branch 9 NALC

Ice Fishing Outing on Lake Mille Lacs

Twin Pines Resort & Motel/Restaurant

Located just two hours north of the Twin Cities on U.S. Highway 169 (mile marker 232).
 For More information call 1.800.45.4682 or visit www.twinpinesmillelacs.com



Noon Sunday to Noon Monday
January 19th & 20th
\$41/Adult
\$36/Children under 14



Contact Ken Jambois with questions at 763.370.1392

* The Branch will be hosting a chicken and rib buffet at the Twin Pines Resort on Sunday, January 19th from 3:00 - 8:00PM. This dinner is included in the price of the ice house.*

Several Houses Available:

- | | |
|-----------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| *4 Hole Ice House (sleeps 2-3) | *6-10 Hole Ice House (sleeps 4-6) |
| *8-12 Hole Ice House (sleeps 5-6) | *10-12 Hole Ice House (sleeps 8) |
| *10-14 Hole Ice House (sleeps 14) | *11 Hole Ice House (sleeps 10) |
| *14 Hole Ice House (sleeps 14) | |

Each include: Propane heat, lights, table/chairs, covered pad for bunks, carpeted floors.
 Cook stoves are available in the larger houses. Check in time is 1:00PM

Branch 9 Fishing

Name: _____ Station: _____

Type of Ice House: _____ Amount Paid: _____

Name of Guests (if under 14 include age): _____

Deadline is
Tuesday, January 15th

Checks payable to: Branch 9 Ice Fishing
 2408 Central Avenue NE
 Minneapolis, MN 55418

CHECKED YOUR CAN LATELY?

Your dog repellent can, that is. As essential as ice grippers in the winter and SPF sunscreen in the summer, a necessary part of your everyday postal equipment is your dog spray. No single item is more important for your personal safety than your can of dog repellent spray.

ARI, (USPS contractor for HALT! Dog Repellent) states on their website that "HALT!'s pressurized spray is accurate up to 10 feet." Along with your satchel or package, the repellent should offer protection against an aggressive dog.

Picture this scenario: As you approach a house with mail or a package for delivery, a dog suddenly appears from around the corner of the house and aggressively charges you. You quickly use the satchel/package as protection and whip out your can of dog repellent to stop the attacker in its tracks, only to have **nothing happen when you press the button**. If you're lucky, you will be able to retreat out of harms way before becoming a statistic.

So what the heck happened?

Pepperspraycenter.com advises to replace your dog repellent after the expiration date (printed on the bottom of the repellent). Every aerosol-based can of pepper spray is prone to lose internal pressure over time. The propellant gas inside the canister does lose pressure, and when that happens the can does not shoot the spray anymore but just sputters it around. It's dangerous to rely on

The ten worst cities for dog attacks, as determined by the U.S. Postal Service, are listed below, along with the accompanying number of attacks in 2012:

1. Los Angeles, CA (69)
2. San Antonio, TX & Seattle, WA (42 each)
3. Chicago, IL (41)
4. San Francisco, CA (38)
5. Philadelphia, PA (34)
6. Detroit, MI (33)
7. St. Louis, MO (32)
8. Baltimore, MD & Sacramento, CA (29)
9. Houston, TX & **Minneapolis, MN (27)**
10. Cleveland and Dayton, OH (26)

old cans because you can never be sure how it will perform when you need it the most.

Milestonesafety.com states that most defensive sprays have an expiration date stamped on the canister. The aerosol propellant may leak out, rendering the spray less effective. The nature of the product suggests that effectiveness is of utmost importance. We recommend replacing your spray after the expiration date.

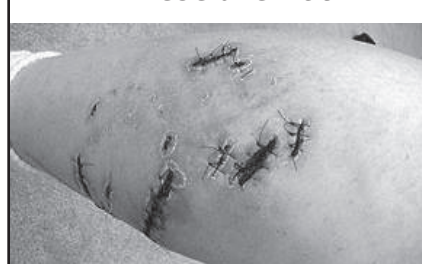
Sadly, "man's best friend" is often a letter carrier's worst menace. Despite extensive training on how to avoid aggressive canines — and ample supplies of dog repellent — nearly 6000 postal workers were bitten by dogs in 2012, according to newly-released statistics from the U.S. Postal Service.

So, have you checked your can lately? Management must ensure a safe work environment; this includes dog repellent spray. Use the USPS Form 1767 to obtain ample supplies, or unfortunately resort to the grievance process.

This is a cartoon



These are not



Who Really Built America



By: JoAnn Gilbaugh (Lowry),
Branch 9 Scribe, Trustee.

A few months ago there was a mini-series on television called "The Men Who Built America" It told the stories of Vanderbilt, Carnegie, Rockefeller, Morgan, and Ford. Their individual desire to amass fortunes and yield untold power drove modern day invention and birthed the Industrial Revolution. The intent of the series was to show "how their historic achievements came to create the America of today."

While the men lauded in this series were the catalyst, here is the truth: the working men and women of this country built America. Without manpower, these men could

Safety* **When You Least Expect It***Safety



Jim Julik (Elk River) was pulling up to a mailbox when he was struck from behind by the car in this photo. Jim said that he didn't see the car until impact. Jim was wearing his seatbelt, yet sustained arm and hip bruises, and recently neck trauma and back problems.

Safety begins with you. Wear your seatbelt!

have never accomplished their goals. They amassed their fame and fortune on the backs of their employees.

The true historic achievements were made by the men, women, and children who worked incredibly long hours daily, under unsafe conditions, and barely making enough money to survive. The labor movement was born and grew out of those circumstances. The workers that believed in the cause formed labor unions and in many cases put their lives on the line. Their commitment and sacrifice led to the workplace rights that we enjoy and take for granted today.

Unfortunately, there are those in

Congress and Corporate America who would like to roll back the labor movement. Breaking Unions and stripping workers of their rights and then promoting it as "good business" and vital to our economy. The elite 2% continue their quest to brainwash the middle class, convincing workers that they don't warrant a living wage and worse yet, those who have good paying jobs are under-serving.

Make no mistake, we are the backbone of America. Let's strengthen our workforce, our union, and our country. We owe it to those who came before us, and to those who will follow; our children and grandchildren.

UNIFORMS UNLIMITED

Minneapolis
2220 Lyndale Avenue South
Minneapolis, MN 55405
612-377-0011

The Twin Cities Postal Headquarters

USA
Union preferred

St. Paul
935 N. Dale Street
St. Paul, MN 55103
651-224-7567

VP Article continued from page 5

Follow Up

If your actions and others have earned a positive vote on your issues make sure to follow up with a thank you. Not only by letter, but if by chance you meet them in person always follow up with a thank you and ask for their continued support.

The names and contact information for all legislators in the State of Minnesota are listed in the pocket calendars the Branch hands out to every member yearly. The information is also listed on our website "branch9nalc.com" under the heading of Legislative.

As letter carriers, we have the opportunity every day make ourselves irreplaceable to our customers. It was proven again this year at the State Fair, customers love their letter carrier. Each mailbox represents at least one voting constituent, be it a residential or business delivery. The service we provide will influence their perception of what and/or who the "Postal Service" of tomorrow should be and what could be gone if some people in Congress have their way. So despite the fact that for years management has allowed service to take a back seat to "making the numbers", by simply doing your job professionally you'll be,

in effect, "lobbying" to insure the continuation of mail delivery 6 days a week and a bright future for the Postal Service.

Employee Tipping and Gift-Receiving Policy

All postal employees, must comply with the Standards of Ethical Conduct. Under these federal regulations, carriers are permitted to accept a gift worth \$20 or less from a customer per occasion, such as Christmas. However, cash and cash equivalents, such as checks or gift cards that can be exchanged for cash, must never be accepted in any amount. Furthermore, no employee may accept more than \$50 worth of gifts from any one customer in any one calendar year period.

There are rules regarding gifts for USPS mail carriers. While many Postal Service customers have traditionally thanked their mail carrier with gifts of cash during the holiday season, this practice puts our employees at risk of violating federal law. Postal Service employees may not accept gifts from outside sources (including Postal Service customers) or gifts given to them because of their official positions. Postal Service employees are also

prohibited from soliciting gifts from outside sources.

Please be aware that there have been Postal employees disciplined and even removed for using gift cards that they found in collection boxes, on the street, and in some cases, given to them by customers saying they found the gift cards in front of the Post Office. In all these instances, the gift cards were planted by the OIG. The OIG has conducted "integrity tests." In these tests, the OIG agents have placed gift cards that have values of \$25-\$50 in the outgoing mail slots. Collection boxes and even in single-family mailboxes. As letter carriers, it is common for our customers to leave gifts in their mailbox even outside of the holidays, and we normally accept these gifts.

Should you find a gift card in a collection box, or are given a gift card by someone you are not familiar with, leave it and call your supervisor. Should you pick it up and use the gift card, or give it to a member of your family or friends, you could be in serious trouble. The only way that card got out of the collection box is by your removing it. Play it safe, and be professional.

Credits to Region 7 National Business Agent, Chris Wittenburg for portions of this article.



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

AME'S UNIFORMS

OUR BUSINESS IS MAKING YOU LOOK GOOD!

We offer "Life of the Garment" guarantee.

If fixable we will repair your uniform at no cost to you.

Take waist in/out and change hem length

Ame's Uniforms is a UNION PREFERRED vendor



Retiree Holiday Party Wednesday, December 4th

This year's event will once again feature friendly libations, good food, and plenty of time for reminiscing and extending holiday cheer to all our colleagues who we have worked with and known for so many years.

Fred Babcock VFW
6715 Lakeshore Drive
Richfield, MN
612.869.5555

Social Hour
Begins at 6:00PM

Dinner
7:00 - 9:00PM



Dinner Menu
Choice of:
Prime Rib or
1/2 Oven-baked Chicken
or Walleye
Salad
Potato
Vegetable
Coffee, Tea, Milk

Please complete the reservation form below and return it to the Branch Office by November 27th

RETIREE HOLIDAY PARTY

Name: _____

Chicken Prime Rib Walleye (Circle One)

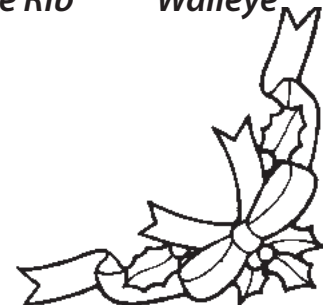
I will be bringing _____ guest(s)

Name of Guest 1: _____ Chicken Prime Rib Walleye

Name of Guest 2: _____ Chicken Prime Rib Walleye

Cost: \$20.00/Person

All checks made out and mailed to:
NALC Branch 9 Retiree Holiday Party
2408 Central Avenue NE, Minneapolis, MN 55418



Branch Nine News
2408 Central Avenue NE
Minneapolis, MN 55418-3712



Change Service Requested

PRSR STD
US POSTAGE
PAID
TWIN CITIES MN
PERMIT NO. 91964



Stay informed by:

- Signing up for E-activist at NALC.org
- Branch9nalc.com (website)
- “like” our Branch 9 facebook page
- Follow us on Twitter



November 26

Nokomis Retiree Breakfast
9:00AM
Fred Babcock VFW Post 5555
6715 Lakeshore Drive, Richfield

Tuesday, November 26

General Membership Meeting
7:00PM
Golden Valley VFW Post 7051
7775 Medicine Lake Rd
Golden Valley

December 4

Retiree Holiday Party
6:00PM
Fred Babcock VFW Post 5555
6715 Lakeshore Drive
Richfield

December 10

Southside Retiree Breakfast
9:00AM
Fred Babcock VFW Post 5555
6715 Lakeshore Drive, Richfield

****December 10****

NALC Health Plan Fair
6:00PM
Golden Valley VFW Post 7051
7775 Medicine Lake Rd
Golden Valley

December 10

****Combined****
Steward/General Membership
Meeting
7:00PM
Golden Valley VFW Post 7051
7775 Medicine Lake Rd
Golden Valley

December 24

Nokomis Retiree Breakfast
9:00AM
Fred Babcock VFW Post 5555
6715 Lakeshore Drive, Richfield

January 7

Northside Retiree's Breakfast
9:30AM
Elsie's
729 Marshall St. NE, Minneapolis

January 14

Southside Retiree Breakfast
9:00AM
Fred Babcock VFW Post 5555
6715 Lakeshore Drive,
Richfield

January 14

Stewards Meeting
7:00PM
Golden Valley VFW Post 7051
7775 Medicine Lake Rd
Golden Valley

January 28

Nokomis Retiree Breakfast
9:00AM
Fred Babcock VFW Post 5555
6715 Lakeshore Drive, Richfield