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May 2014

The Post Office is Not For Sale

By: Chuck Glover, Editor

On Thursday afternoon of April 24th, over 100 people gathered in the parking lot outside of Har Mar Mall in Roseville to protest the Postal Service's attempt to privatize APWU clerk craft duties by opening privately run and managed Post Office window services at Staples stores. Currently there are 80 stores in a "no bid sweetheart deal", but the USPS wants to expand it to be in1500 Staples stores nationwide.

The USPS' position is that this is not new business because they have had contracts with private businesses before. The USPS claims that customers want the convenience of later shipping hours and less time waiting in line at the Post Office.

What L'enfant Plaza seems incapable of comprehending is that the solution would simply be to expand window service hours in the current Post Offices. Even the APWU has come out in favor of expanding window hours, and even working at Staples stores doing retail services. Yet the "maroons" (as Bugs Bunny would say) at L'enfant Plaza continue to cut window service hours, thus creating longer lines in an attempt to disillusion the public towards USPS services. The USPS tried to privatize retail services back in the 1980's by opening mail services in Sears stores. When concerned citizens cancelled their Sears credit accounts and refused to shop in their stores, Sears closed their private mail services.

Our esteemed Postmaster General, Patrick Donahoe thinks that this is the way of today's world and he's not backing away from this privatization plan. A USPS internal memo states, "The pilot will be used to determine if lower costs can be realized with retail partner labor instead of labor traditionally associated with retail windows at Post Offices..."

The average fulltime Staples employee makes about 18K/year for working 40 hours a week. [Of course the spokesperson for Staples would not comment or provide details about their agreements with their vendors. Yup, the Postal Service is merely a vendor.)

What the general public may not realize is that any package or letter mailed at a Staples store, does not have the protection or sanctity of the mails until a USPS employee picks it up. Also the Postal Inspection Service has no authority over lost or stolen items until they are in the USPS's hands.

Do you really believe that an \$8/hr part-time Staples employee is going to ask any security questions before accepting a package from a customer?

I'm confident that evil-doers are drooling with anticipation to have the ability to place dangerous items onto U.S. airlines via this private mail service. God forbid that something like this should ever happen, but if there is an incident, Patrick Donahoe must be held directly responsible.

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"The privatization discussion is a ruse. We have no interest in privatizing the Postal Service."

Postmaster General, Patrick Donahoe.



Don't look now PMG, but your nose is growing!

Branch Nine News

May 2014





Lisa O'Neill stands with three new retirees from Coon Rapids. Denny Ryan, Tim Anderson and John Hanna.



Craig Mills (Burnsville) is all smiles on his final day, as Connies Beissel (steward) watches.



James Coleman (center) says congratulations to newly retired Mike Hess, and Bob Robillard (W. Edina).



Jeff Berg (Minnehaha) is congratulated by Kieran Hughes (steward) upon his last clock-ring.



John Smith (Bloomington) is flanked by stewards Scott Martinson and Vicki Fleming.



Mike Trudeau watches as Darrell Shreck (Chanhassen) closes out his postal career.



Diana Fodstad (Robbinsdale) retired on April 26th, after 28 years.



Flanked by Brooklyn Center Stewards, Ken Jambois and Theresa Oelrich, Diane Hall closes out her career.

In Memoriam Edwin Acker Benjamin Brown Paul Felegy Allen Smith John Sporrona George Vados

Branch Nine, NALC 2408 Central Ave. NE Minneapolis, MN 55418 Voice: (612) 781-9858 Fax: (612) 781-9849 E-Mail Addresses: Website: branch9nalc.com Editor: branch9news@branch9nalc.com

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"How the Postal Service could overhaul its retirement and leave benefits." So, you think your retirement annuity is safe?

From: Government Executive By Eric Katz, May 8, 2014

The U.S. Postal Service spent \$6 billion on retirement benefits in fiscal 2013, and the agency thought that was too much.

USPS asked its inspector general's office to evaluate its retirement packages against the benefits offered at other organizations. Current law mandates the Postal Service offer employees enrollment in the Federal Employees Retirement System, unless they were grandfathered into the Civil Service Retirement System.

In the resulting white paper report, the IG found many of the entities the auditors studied -- both public and private -- have adapted their retirement programs to reflect rising costs and budgetary realities. The Postal Service, of course, has not changed its offerings since FERS was created in 1987.

Federal statute requires USPS employees to receive "compensation comparable to the private sector," the auditors noted. Federal employees earn 39 percent of their total compensation through benefits, however, compared to 30 percent for private-sector workers. The Postal Service spent 12.3 percent of its \$47 billion compensation budget on retirement expenses in fiscal 2013, while private-sector companies averaged just 3.7 percent.

"Unlike private sector companies,"

the IG also pointed out, "the Postal Service does not have the authority to change retirement benefits for its employees."

Pensions, such as the defined benefit portion of FERS, used to be the most common form of retirement program in the United States, the auditors wrote, but over the last few decades 401(k) plans have become more popular. FERS also offers a 401(k)-type option through the Thrift Savings Plan.

Of the eight organizations the IG studied -- six private-sector companies, one state government and one city government -- all historically had defined benefit pensions, but seven of them moved at least partially to defined contributions. The unspecified state government maintained its pension plan, but increased the retirement age requirement, decreased employee benefits and offered a delayed compensation plan.

"These organizations are...freeing themselves of long-term retirement costs by shifting the responsibility to the employee," the auditors wrote. The move toward retirement savings accounts like the TSP also reflects today's more "mobile and transient" workforce, as employees can typically take a 401(k) with them to new jobs.

A private communications firm estimated \$3 billion in savings over 10 years by switching from a defined-benefit to a definedcontribution plan, while the state government predicted \$5 billion in reduced liabilities over 30 years from its changes.

One of the companies the IG examined was the "world's largest package delivery company," which still offers a pension to its unionized workforce but transitioned its nonunionized employees to a 401(k) plan. The USPS IG argued the defined-contribution plan offered workers more flexibility, and the company "plans to persuade all employees" to switch to the 401(k) program.

Another common practice among the organizations that maintained some version of a pension, was that they increased the length of service requirement to become eligible for the benefit, the IG said. The auditors found a "healthy, collaborative relationship between the organization and its unions is pivotal" to reforming retirement benefits. Organizations that changed their programs openly communicated to the unions the "difficulties and cost burdens" they were incurring.

Of course, none of these suggestions are possible without congressional action. And postal reform of any kind hasn't exactly proven easy over the last few years. If the agency is able to institute changes, however, the inspector general said it has laid out a successful framework.

Continued on page 10

Why COLCPE contributions help save the Postal Service. We need to support those who support us

By: Sen. Bernie Sanders (I-Vt.) Wednesday, March 5, 2014

The U.S. Postal Service is one of our most popular and important government agencies. It provides universal service six days a week to every corner of America, no matter how small or remote. It supports millions of jobs in virtually every other sector of our economy. It provides decent-paying union jobs to some 500,000 Americans, and it is the largest employer of veterans.

Whether you are a low-income elderly woman living at the end of a dirt road in Vermont or a wealthy CEO living on Park Avenue, you get your mail six days a week. And you pay for this service at a cost far less than anywhere else in the industrialized world.

Yet the Postal Service is under constant and vicious attack. Why? The answer is simple. There are very powerful and wealthy special interests who want to privatize or dismember virtually every function that government now performs, whether it is Social Security, Medicare, public education or the Postal Service. They see an opportunity for Wall Street and corporate America to make billions in profits out of these services, and couldn't care less how privatization or a degradation of services affects ordinary Americans. For years, antigovernment forces have been telling us that there is a financial crisis at the Postal Service and that it is going broke. That is not true. The crisis is manufactured.

At the insistence of the Bush administration, Congress in 2006

passed legislation that required the Postal Service to prefund, over a 10-year period, 75 years of future retiree health benefits. This onerous and unprecedented burden—\$5.5 billion a year—is responsible for all of the financial losses posted by the Postal Service since October 2012. Without prefunding, the Postal Service would have made a \$623 million profit last year. Excluding the prefunding mandate, the Postal Service estimates it will make more than \$1 billion in profits this year. This is not surprising, since the Postal Service made a combined profit of \$9 billion from 2003-06, before the prefunding mandate took effect. The mandate allows the antigovernment crowd to proclaim that the Postal Service "is going bankrupt." Their solution is to slash hundreds of thousands of jobs, close thousands of post offices, eliminate hundreds of mail processing plants, end Saturday mail, and substantially slow down mail delivery.

In the House, Rep. Darrell Issa (R., Calif.) passed a bill through his committee that would do all of these things. The bill would drive more customers to seek other options and will lead to a death spiral—lower-quality service, fewer customers, more cuts, less revenue and eventually the destruction of the Postal Service.

In the Senate, Sens. Tom Carper (D., Del.) and Tom Coburn (R., Okla.) also passed a postal reform bill through the Homeland Security and Government Affairs Committee. While not as destructive as the House proposal, the Carper-Coburn bill could lead to the loss of about 100,000 jobs, allow the Postal Service to eliminate sixday mail delivery, substantially slow down the delivery of mail, and lead to the loss of more mail processing plants and post offices within the next few years.

There are much better ideas that would strengthen, not destroy the Postal Service, and they are in the Postal Service Protection Act that has been introduced by Rep. Peter DeFazio (D., Ore.) in the House and by me in the Senate. The House bill has 174 co-sponsors. The Senate bill has 27 co-sponsors.

First, prefunding must end. The future retiree health fund now has some \$50 billion in it. That is enough. This step alone will restore the Postal Service to profitability.

Second, the Postal Service should have the flexibility to provide new consumer products and services a flexibility that was banned by Congress in 2006. It is now against the law for workers in post offices to notarize or make copies of documents; to cash checks; to deliver wine or beer; or to engage in e-commerce activities (like scanning physical mail into a PDF and sending it through e-mail, selling non-postal products on the Internet or offering a non-commercial version of Gmail).

A recent report from the Postal Service Inspector General suggests that almost \$9 billion a year

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Executive Vice President's Report

Pivoting

In the current environment of fluctuating mail volumes some things are beyond the control of rank and file letter carriers such as the daily workload on any given route on any given day. Couple that with the snow and ice from the past long winter, management will be pushing carriers to make up the over budgeted delivery hours it took this past winter. Every carrier is aware that the mail stream is not consistent by any means and with the mailers wanting delivery on certain dates the daily workload varies from day to day and will continue to vary in the future.

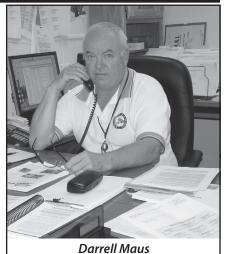
Article 34 of the National Agreement recognizes a fair days work for a fair days pay and therefore when the workload is light management has the right to have carriers pivot to fulfill the 8 hours in a day. Pivoting is management's way of utilizing the under time on a route or routes in order to have carriers work off their assignment and perform office or street duties on a vacant route due to either staffing issues or a carrier being absent. Pivoting does not change the provisions of Article 41 of the National Agreement where it states carriers are to work their assignments as bid. A pivot is work carriers perform to fulfill their 8 hour day over and above their regular assignment. Management may curtail mail on vacant routes that are to be pivoted and also on a regular scheduled carriers assignment so that carrier can pivot as long as the delivery time standards on the curtailed mail is still accomplished. Remem-

ber the projected under time in DOIS is derived from reduced office/casing time due to mail volumes. While a carrier's office time may be less than normal there may be reasons for their street time to be longer on that same day because of either coverages or other factors. If you are asked by management to pivot and you believe it is more than you can do in 8 hours request a 3996 for the time and inform management of the reason you cannot do the pivot. If management denies your request for auxiliary assistance then ask for instructions on what to do when you become aware of the fact that you will not be able to complete the work in 8 hours. As always if instructions are not clear or other issues arise ask for time to speak with your steward!

It is a fact that the Postal Service has had the help wanted sign out for over a year now and are continuing to hire to alleviate the staffing issues. Within our union we are also in need of members to step forward and fill needed positions.

Shop Steward

Currently there are offices that do not have a steward or the proper number of designated stewards and alternates. As per our Branch 9 By-laws the responsibilities of a steward are; "Stewards will be responsible for investigation and filing grievances at the initial level (station) of the grievance process for contractual violations as well as disciplinary action against the carriers in their work unit." Stewards are expected to attend the training sessions sponsored by the Branch,



make announcements and post information in the proper location (union bulletin boards) at their station provided to them by the National or Branch. Help new and probationary employees learn station policies and inform the full time officers of any problems in enforcement of the National and Local Agreements. While these are the duties of the steward from the Branch 9 By-Laws, to be honest, they should be the job description of every Branch 9 member. A steward is someone who has to be willing to stand up for others when the contractual rights of carriers have been violated whether a contractual or disciplinary issue. To some, the job of a steward may seem daunting and time consuming. It will be. The Branch and its officers will provide the necessary resources and training to every steward and alternate to help them. That is my and this Branch's commitment. But a steward also needs the support of those around them on the workroom floor. How difficult their job is will be determined by those who are being represented. The old saying is true "many hands make light work." The same is true of the job of the steward and alternate.

VP continued on page 8

Editor's article continued from page 1

Recently the APWU filed an Unfair Labor Practice against the USPS. During that hearing before the National Labor Relations Board, the Post Office was forced to provide the APWU its 58 page agreement with the Staples stores. To the right is page one of the agreement.

Teachers unions, nurses unions, and all postal unions have pledged not to shop at Staples stores.

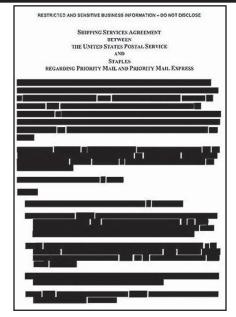
Every Federal Employee takes the following oath:

The Oath of Office for Civil Service Employees

Federal employees take the same oath of office as Congress, by which they swear to support and defend the Constitution of the United States of America.

"I, [name], do solemnly swear (or affirm) that I will support and defend the Constitution of the United States against all enemies, foreign and domestic; that I will bear true faith and allegiance to the same; that I take this obligation freely, without any mental reservation or purpose of evasion; and that I will well and faithfully discharge the duties of the office on which I am about to enter. So help me God." 5 U.S.C. §3331

What kind of oath do you think Staples employees make?





Representatives from the Minnesota Nurses Association were there in support of Postal Day of Action.



Both Mike Zagaros (Br9 President), and Darrell Maus (BR9 Vice President) had a meeting with Minnesota Congressman, Keith Ellison (who attended the rally) in the parking lot at Har Mar Mall.



Connie Beissel (Burnsville) and Angela Collins (Postal Data Center) were there to support fellow postal workers.



Dan Garhofer (Br 28 President) spoke in support of APWU workers outside the Staples store at Har Mar Mall.



This is just a portion of the crowd gathered to protest the privatization of Postal Services.





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May 2014



Rodney Anderson (Branch 9 Director of Retirees)

Once you have mailed in all the necessary forms from your "Blue Book", then you have only to wait until your last day. Many carriers realize that this is a very significant adjustment in their lives, and/or circumstances may change, and they may reconsider the decision to retire. It's called "cold feet". In the back of everyone's mind that are considering retiring are the questions. "What if I decide to back out? Can I back out?

Yes, you can back out, even after sending all the signed forms from your Blue Book back to OPM, and getting all your calculations set "in stone". The absolute latest you can cancel the process is your normal punch-in time of the day after your last day. In other words, if your last day is May 1, but circumstances change so you decide not to retire, you may go into work and punch-in at your normal time on May 2. If you do this, the entire process is annulled. It may cause some headaches to management, but who cares? This is your life. However, any time after May 2, if you haven't cancelled, you can no longer do so.

How to Retire (Part 4)

What can you expect then?

For one thing, your next paycheck will be your last with the Postal Service. In this check you will receive not only the compensation for your last days of work, back pay for any overpayments to Retirement (if you have more than 41 years and 11 months), or a payoff for your annual leave. You will receive a cash payout for up to 440 hours (be aware that they will calculate on a prorated basis how much you have earned this year). Anything over 440 hours, you lose.

With that last check, you are separated from the Postal Service. From then on, your "boss" is the Office of Personnel Management (www.opm.gov), a federal agency independent of the Postal Service. All your further dealings will be with them.

What about sick leave? Do I get paid for that?

No. For CSRS employees (and after January 1, 2014, for FERS employees as well), you don't get a cash payout as you do for your annual leave, but however much sick leave you have banked is added to your service time, for calculating your pension. (For example, I retired with 37 1/2 years; but I had almost a year of sick leave built up, so am credited with 38 1/2 years on my pension.) Please be aware, however, that you cannot receive credit for more than 41 years and 11 months, no matter how long you work.

You may have heard that OPM is experiencing some delays in get-

ting retirements finalized. Unfortunately this is true. I haven't heard of anyone having the process take more than 2 to 4 months at most.

If you want to ask me anything, either call or write me at the Branch office, or send me an e-mail at <u>rodney@branch9nalc.com</u>. My phone number is 651-270-7807. <u>I may</u> <u>not know the answer off-hand,</u> <u>but so long as you're an NALC</u> <u>member, I'll find out for you.</u>



The Following is a list of Paid Members of PAL 9 for April, 2014.

Very Concerned Members Dale Forde Theresa (Homstad) Johnson Jane E. Doe

<u>Regular Members</u> Duane Pederson Chris Williams Katherine Duax-Kunkel Todd Kunkel

Ron Lawrence Treasurer PAL 9 7

Branch Nine News



(Br9 Health Benefits Representative)

Spring has sprung – or has it? It's time to try and fit into those summer clothes again? If you need a little help the NALC Health Benefit Plan offers a new Weight Talk program to help you become a healthier you. Making the correct food choices with a designated coach will help you develop and follow a realistic healthy eating plan designed especially for you. Coaches are available 7 days-aweek, from 5 a.m. to 9 p.m. (PST). Weight Talk is free for anyone with NALC Health Insurance and it's confidential. Here's a little tip (taking us back to when we were in grade school and had to learn the different food groups and how many portions we should eat - that didn't seem possible at the time). Fruits and vegetables boost your health and how you feel. Are you eating 5 servings a day? What is a serving you might ask?

<u>Fruit serving sizes</u>: a small apple, 16 grapes, 4 large strawberries, 1 medium cantaloupe wedge, 14 oz container of applesauce, 1 large plum, 1 small box of raisins

<u>Vegetable serving sizes:</u> 12 baby carrots, 5 broccoli florets, 1 large ear of corn, 1 large bell pepper, 1 medium potato, 1 large sweet potato

If you make half of your plate fruit and vegetables you should be well on your way to a healthier you. Enroll for FREE at <u>www.weighttalk.net</u>, or call 855-WGT-TALK (948-8255) today and start becoming a healthier you.

Julie Waldemar 612-963-NALC (6252)



Your're four times it's hard to more likely to have concentrate on a road accident two things when you're on at the same time a mobile phone

Take your eyes off the road for four seconds to answer your cell phone, at 55mph, you have traveled the distance of a football field. *VP* article continued from page 5

Safety Liaisons

There is a signed Safety Agreement between the president of Branch 9 and the postmaster. One of the provisions of this agreement is that each station will have a designated safety liaison. They are volunteers who are insuring a safer work environment for you. They are required to perform daily inspections of facilities with a checklist looking for and identifying safety hazards. They will also investigate every accident to try to determine its root cause. This is done so hopefully there will be a reduction of future accidents and hopefully fewer injured carriers. As changes continue in our working environment and carriers are on the street more hours, there will be more risks. Through the work of the safety liaisons those risks will hopefully be reduced. Safety is everyone's responsibility, but these representatives are standing up for our safety. Thank you to those of you who are currently serving as safety liaisons, but there are still openings available in some locations.

So if you find that you are concerned about issues in your work environment and want to become an active part in doing something about it, please give Mike or me a call at the Branch Office.



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

May 2014

2014 MDA Bowl-a-Thon



Julie Waldemar (Golden Valley), and Ann Baird took in receipts and assigned alley's for teams.



Naomi Bristlin and Pam Thompson (Richfield) seem to be concerned about their scores.



Bob Baird (Retiree) and Connie Beissel (Burnsville) inventory the silent auction baskets.





Darrell Maus (BR9 VP) poses with Gina Baker, the winner of the free bowling party for 40 people. Gina won this by getting a strike in the lane with a pink pin.



Rick and Barb Rimer (Brklyn Park) sharing a good laugh with their teammates.



The Anoka team - Stacey Ellingson, Gina Baker, Jim Nelson & Scott Bussman



Melia Derrick (Brklyn Park) and Mary Kay Glover coordinated the raffle tickets.



A team from Branch 28 participated in our MDA Bowl-a-Thon. Thank you for donating your time for a good cause.



Gift basket donated by our friends at Twin Pines Resort on Mille Lacs Lake. Branch 9's ice fishing and summer fishing outings are out of their resort.



A very special Thank You to our Corporate Lane Sponsors!

Memorial Day **Remembrance**

As we go about our lives, and plan for that long weekend, or barbeque, take a moment to reflect on those who presently serve our Nation, and those who gave the ultimate sacrifice for our freedom.



•PETER ALLAN SPARKS•

HN, Fox Co. 2nd Battalion/ 9th Marines KIA Quang Tri Province 10/4/67 To my friend and classmate: I will never forget. Editor, Chuck Glover

Sen. Bernie Sanders continued from page 4

could be generated by providing financial services. At a time when more than 80 million lowerincome Americans have no bank accounts or are forced to rely on rip-off check-cashing storefronts and payday lenders, these kinds of financial services would be of huge social benefit.

It is time for Congress to save the Postal Service, not dismantle it.

Mr. Sanders is an Independent Senator from Vermont.

F.Y.I.

Putting postal counters in Staples stores is clearly intended to replace postal workers in brick-andmortar post offices. The only way this can save the Postal Service any money is by reducing the number of clerks at nearby post offices and then closing post offices completely. Maybe that's why one of the provisions in Darrell Issa's postal reform legislation removes the right to appeal a post office closure to the PRC if there's a Contract Postal Unit within two miles of the post office. There are over 1,200 post offices within a couple of miles of a Staples store.

Retirement and Leave Benefits Continued from page 3

Leave Policies

The inspector general's office also reviewed in a separate white paper USPS' leave policy in comparison to six private-sector and two government organizations.

The auditors found several companies were moving away from specified leave -- such as the annual, sick and personal leave the Postal Service offers -- and toward a more general "paid time off" policy. Analysis of data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics showed the average number of total days off, including holidays, ranged from 33 to 49 in the private sector, depending on length of service. The Postal Service similarly offers between 36 and 49 paid days off annually.

Most of the organizations the IG studied, however, have tighter limits on the number of vacation days employees can carry over into a new year. The cap at the eight employers ranged from three to 36 days, while Postal Service workers can carry over 55 days of annual leave and an unlimited number of sick days.

By modifying its leave policies the Postal Service can likely reduce costs and have employees working more days, the IG said, but the changes would present several challenges. The difficulties include "legal requirements, union negotiations, updated information technology to support changes and assessments of the impact of benefit changes on employees."

Branch 9 NALC

Fishing 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).

Poles and bait provided, but feel free to bring your own poles. For more information call 1.800.450.4682 or visit www.twinpinesmillelacs.com

Sunday, June 22nd



9:00AM - 1:00PM (Meet at the resort at 8:30AM) *Twin Pines opens for breakfast at 7:00AM*



\$33/Adult \$28/Children under 12

The Branch will be hosting a roasted chicken lunch (with hash browns, cole slaw and a drink) at Twin Pines Resort after we return from fishing. This lunch is included in the price.

Name:

Station:

Amount Paid:

Name of Guests (if under 14 include age):

Deadline is on Monday, June 16th Checks payable to: Branch 9 Fishing 2408 Central Avenue NE Minneapolis, MN 55418 11

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

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- Stay informed by:
- Signing up for E-activist at NALC.org
 - Branch9nalc.com (website)



Follow us on Twitter

Branch 9 Calendar

June 3 Northside Retiree's Breakfast 9:30AM Elsie's 729 Marshall St. NE, Minneapolis

June 6 N Suburban Retiree's Breakfast 8:30AM Denny's Restaurant 9020 Quaday Ave NE, Otsego

June 10 Southside Retiree Breakfast 9:00AM Fred Babcock VFW Post 5555 6715 Lakeshore Drive, Richfield June 10 Stewards Meeting 7:00PM Golden Valley VFW Post 7051 7775 Medicine Lake Rd Golden Valley

Sunday, June 22

Fishing on Lake Mille Lacs Twin Pines Resort 2hrs. north on U.S. Hwy 169 mile marker 232 9:00AM - 1PM Meet at resort at 8:30 AM June 24 Nokomis Retiree Breakfast 9:00AM Fred Babcock VFW Post 5555 6715 Lakeshore Drive, Richfield

June 24

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

July 1

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