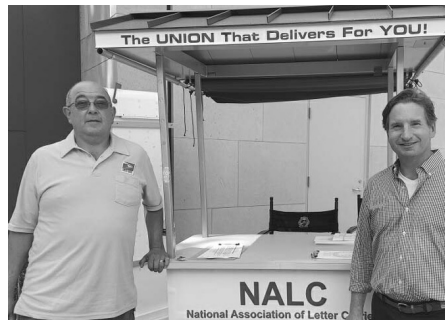


VOLUME 73 No 7

Official Publication of Branch Nine, NALC

September 2021

Branch 9 at the MN State Fair



The Minnesota State Fair returned and so did we. With COVID concerns and the weather, our shifts were reduced and altered. Pictured is (L) Vince Froehlich with 3rd Dist. Representative Dean Phillips. (R) Dale Steinberg, with US Senator Amy Klobuchar, EVP Jo Gilbaugh and Nick Tiemann

Election Notice

This is an official notice, in accordance with Branch 9 By-Laws of elections for the officers and delegates of Jerome J. Keating Branch 9 NALC, Minneapolis, Minnesota.

Nominations for the offices of: President; Executive Vice President; Recording Secretary; Financial Secretary; Treasurer; Editor; Sergeant at Arms; NALC Health Benefits Representative; Director of Retirees; three (3) Trustees; Delegates to the 2022 MSALC State Convention; four (4) Delegates to the Minnesota, AFL-CIO/Minneapolis Regional Labor Federation (RLF); three (3) Delegates to the St. Paul Regional Labor Federation (RLF) will be held at the September General Membership Meeting on Tuesday, September 28, 2021.

This meeting can be attended either virtually or in person at the Crystal VFW, 5222 56th Avenue North, Crystal, MN 55429. Meeting start time is at 7:00pm.

With the exception of MSALC delegates, the term for all offices will be three (3) years beginning in January 2022. The President and Executive Vice President shall be Delegates to the NALC Convention, MSALC State Convention and Minnesota AFLCIO/Minneapolis RLF by virtue of their office. Candidates must complete the appropriate Letter of Intent and return same to the Recording Secretary at the General Membership Meeting in which they are nominated or within 10 days thereafter; to the Branch 9 office, by no later than 5:00pm.

Elections for contested officer positions and Minnesota AFL-CIO/Minneapolis or St. Paul RLF Delegates will be by referendum ballot that must be returned to the designated post office box selected by the Election Committee by 9:00am, Tuesday, November 23, 2021. Should an election of delegates to the MSALC State Convention be necessary, it will be held at the October General Membership Meeting on October 26, 2021.

RETIREMENTS



*Vicki Chlebeck
(Bloomington Station)
Last Punch.
Best Wishes!*

NEW MEMBERS

- Christina House
- Gregory Lang
- Nathan Miller
- John Niznick
- Hannah Peterson-McDaniel
- April Piepgras
- Pooja Subramanian
- Samantha Torrez
- Andrew Truckenmiller

In Memoriam

Roger Coryell

*correction August 2021
Memorials, Roger Bresnahan is
NOT deceased

Announcement Branch 9 Members

General Membership Meetings
will have an **in-person** option!

We are planning In-Person/ZOOM for all future
General Membership Meetings.

@
7:00PM
Crystal VFW, Crystal, MN

Or you may still attend via ZOOM
sign up below

STATION: _____ Steward's Initials: _____
If Active Member

NAME: _____

COMPLETE ADDRESS: _____
Address, Unit #, City, State, Zip

PHONE #: _____ E-Mail: _____

POSTAL RECORD #: _____
(Must have to confirm you are a NALC member in good standing – located on Postal Record mailing label)

E-mail/Scan to angie@branch9nalc.com, fax to 612.781.9849 or mail completed form
to 4001 Stinson Blvd, Ste 304, Columbia Heights, MN 55421

YOU ONLY NEED TO SIGN-UP ONCE FOR THESE ZOOM GIMM'S!

Branch 9, NALC
**4001 Stinson Blvd. Suite 304
Columbia Heights MN 55421**
Voice: (612) 781-9858
Fax: (612) 781-9849
Website: branch9nalc.com

Branch 9 Officers

- President**
Samantha Hartwig
- Exec. Vice President**
JoAnn Gilbaugh
- Recording Secretary**
Robb Petersburg
- Treasurer**
Barb Watczak
- Financial Secretary**
Stacey Ellingson

Editor

Jeremy Rothstein
branch9news@branch9nalc.com

Sergeant at Arms
Ronaele Bolden

Trustees
Christa Abraham
Latasha McCaleb
Chris Pennock

Director of Retirees
Melia Derrick

NALC Health Benefits Rep.
Ken Jambois
HBR: (763) 370-1392

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

As summer closes out and we prepare for lower temperatures outside we are seeing a rise in COVID cases inside. While it appeared that COVID was finally getting under control the new variants that have emerged are wreaking havoc across the country. Here in Minneapolis, we are seeing positive COVID cases on the rise. It is imperative that if you cannot maintain a six (6) foot distance from another person, regardless of vaccination status, you must wear a face mask. As requirements change the face mask policy will keep everyone updated when changes occur.

COVID has also impacted our August events the Retiree Banquet and the Minnesota State Fair Kiosk. The Retiree Banquet was held on August 15, and while attendance was lower than usual, there was still a great turn out. We honored all our 2020 and 2021 Red and Gold Retirees this year. As a result of COVID there was no National Officer to deliver the keynote address, so we asked President Emeritus Lenny Larson to be this year's keynote speaker. This year's retiree of the year was Pam Donato, she went above and beyond this year helping by giving advice to the Executive Officers of the Branch after the office was burned to the ground. She has taken her own personal time to make special trips back to Minnesota just to look at potential buildings with the building committee.

Most of all it was fun to see our retirees and hear their stories from the past. A central theme developed around our retirees being the history of Branch 9. There is so much knowledge and wisdom that we active carriers can learn and use as our career with the Post Office continues. Soon we will have a new Branch Office, and we are asking for our retirees assistance with recreating the history of Branch 9 for future generations of Letter Carriers in Minneapolis. In the near future I will be putting together a Branch 9 history committee, with the purpose of reaching out to retirees who are willing to tell stories of

their time in the Post Office, or donate old items from clothes to pictures for our new office. We need to understand and learn from our history as we build the future together.

COVID also impacted the State Fair Kiosk. Attendance was down, and so there were fewer people for us to engage with regarding the NALC Political Agenda to move forward. We are asking for the public's help in contacting their Congressional Representatives to move Postal Legislation Forward.

**Postal Reform Act of 2021 -
H.R. 3076**

**Postal Reform Act of 2021 -
S. 1720**

To provide stability to and enhance the services of the United States Postal Service, and for other purposes.

Please contact your representatives and ask your family and friends to do the same. The stronger our employer is now, the better chance for all of us to have a future beneficial retirement from the USPS.

We have been progressing with a purchase agreement to buy a property in St. Louis Park. By the time you read this article the purchase agreement will be signed to purchase the property at 5831 Cedar Lake Road in St. Louis Park. It is an office condo that will be just the right size for the Branch moving forward. We are also in the process of finalizing the details for selling our old property at 2408 Central Ave NE. After thorough research and two professional appraisals on the 2408 Central Property we have accepted an offer of \$375,000.00, which is well above market value. The Building Corporation Committee approved both purchase agreements unanimously. Our attorney has been reviewing both purchase agreements, and we will be signing them both very soon. There will be updates at all of our General Membership Meetings (GMM) going forward, with more details.

The September GMM is our nomination night for officers,



Samantha Hartwig

convention delegates, RLF delegates. I have appointed Bob Baird (retiree) as head election judge for his experience in running Branch Elections, and the knowledge he can pass on. He will be assisted by Annie Burke (Lake Street) and Sam Mwangi (Brooklyn Park). If there are any questions on the elections, please contact the election judges. After these elections there will be elections for all the station stewards in December.

We are still dealing with instances of Management mailing Day In Court (Management's investigation) meeting notices, and if they are not responded to, then Management will **not** reschedule the Day In Court and immediately issue discipline. Even when the carrier returns to work the following day after missing the Day In Court that they were unaware of, management will not say anything to that carrier. This new covert attack on letter carriers is disgusting. Two important things to remember: **1-check your mailbox regardless of your situation, and 2- notify your union steward immediately if you have a Day In Court Notice and/or discipline.** Do not assume your steward knows what is going on because the stewards are not being informed by management at some stations when these letters are sent. If the Union does not know about a missed Day In Court, or the receipt of a discipline letter defending against the charges becomes more difficult.

In Solidarity,
Samantha

2020-21 RED AND GOLD RETIREE BANQUET



David & Loretta Thompson



Retiree of the Year 2021
Pam Donato
Congratulations!



Timothy & Carol Bearth



Renee Hickerson & Melia Derrick



Kenneth Johnson, Curtis Britz
and Gordon Balfe
65 Year Member Retirees



Steve & Jean Philson



Joe & Diane Hall and Barb Kelly



Vernon Zierman, Ron Barker, Jerry
Bromen and Herman Weidner
55 Year Member Retirees



Anita Faulk & Karen Lebak



Keynote Speaker President Ameritus
Lenny Larson



Larry Dahlberg 60 Year Retiree



Joel Carter, Melia and Al Gulden

Exec. Vice President's Report

Most of us familiar with the grievance process have come to expect some station management to attempt to circumvent as much of their contractual responsibilities as possible. The latest flavor of the month has reached a new low. This tactic is based on a technicality that allows management to act questionably when it comes to discipline. As you read on, you may say "my manager would never do this". We hope that is true, but it is never safe to assume you are immune.

Management is now mailing notices for a Day in Court (DIC). This isn't a new practice for **when or if** they need to communicate with a carrier who has been out long-term. But now they are doing it when people are at work and can be told of the DIC in person. If you don't open the letter and/or aren't at work the day of the DIC, Management has decided they are not obligated to ask why you didn't attend. They won't ask when you are at work the next day and they see or speak to you in person. Management just goes ahead and issues discipline. Their excuse? You had your chance. It's on you to reschedule, regardless of whether you are aware a DIC was missed.

Here's where the story gets worse. If you are not present at the Day in Court, Management feels entitled to issue you discipline, which again, is sent by mail, denying your right to defend yourself. This action is a violation of your Article 16 Just Cause right to a thorough investigation:

Before administering the discipline, management must make an investigation to determine whether the employee committed the offense. Management must ensure that its investigation is thorough and objective. This is the employee's day in court privilege. Employees have the right to know with reasonable detail what the charges are and to be given a reasonable opportunity to defend themselves before the discipline is initiated.

What does this mean? Per our National Agreement, Management

is obligated to give you a Day in Court before they issue you any discipline.

When a letter of discipline is issued, the last paragraph states "Within fourteen (14) days of your receipt of this notice, you have the right to file a grievance under the Grievance-Arbitration procedures set forth in Article 15, Section 3 of the National Agreement."

For years, with little exception, Management has communicated with the Stewards at their stations when discipline is issued. We have come to rely on this routine, which gives us the opportunity to grieve any discipline within that 14-day timeline.

Now we get to the part that I consider underhanded. Along with no verbal communication with the carrier, Management is no longer informing the Stewards they have scheduled a DIC or mailed discipline. Their goal is simple. They are counting on you to not pick up your mail or open the letter in time. Management is also relying on you to assume your Steward already knows of the discipline and will file a grievance within the 14-day time period. Under these circumstances, it is all too easy for the 14 days to pass with no grievance filed.

How can they do this? There is no contractual obligation on Management's part to let your Steward know they have issued discipline. So rather than doing the right thing, choosing open communication, and letting the merits of the discipline play out through the grievance process, Management is choosing to take the low road. Their concerted effort to find a loophole and covert actions show a lack of intent to honor the integrity of the grievance process, which ensures carriers the right to an affirmative defense.

How do we respond? We file the grievance as soon as we are notified, regardless of Management's tactics to impede the process. Article 15.2 states, in part:



JoAnn Gilbaugh

Any employee who feels aggrieved must discuss the grievance with the employee's immediate supervisor within fourteen (14) days of the date on which the employee or the Union first learned or may reasonably have been expected to have learned of its cause. This constitutes the Informal Step A filing date... The Union also may initiate a grievance at Informal Step A within 14 days of the date the Union first became aware of (or reasonably should have become aware of) the facts giving rise to the grievance.

An untimely grievance does not mean all hope is lost. It only adds another hurdle in our quest to reduce or remove unjust discipline from the carrier's file. We always argue that the grievance must be heard on the merits of the case. This is where we prove that Management did not meet all of the Just Cause principles by circumventing a Day in Court.

What can you do? The key is to communicate with your Steward to ensure they know if you have received any letters from Management involving discipline and request that they file a grievance. Make sure your Steward is there to represent you in any Day in Court. If the DIC is missed, contact your Manager immediately, don't assume they will reschedule. Our means to effectively grieve has not been diminished, we only need to adjust to meet the circumstances that Management has created. We can and will continue to overcome Management's scheming to game the system. In solidarity there is strength.

2020-21 RED AND GOLD RETIREE BANQUET



Pat Beck & Janet Mandini



Mike & Darlene Zagaros
Darrell & Peggy Maus



Joe Thomas & Harold Tibury



Jon Frick



Dave Thompson, Francis Rice, Larry Blesi & Art Kujawa. **60 Year Retirees**



Jerry & Marion Broman



Ron & Mary Sholl



David Pierson, Mike Mrolsa, Dave Millete & Glen Lindfors. **50 Year Member Retirees**



Thomas & Rose Holten



Thomas Holten, Morris Gross, Tom Dvorak & David Burandt. **50 Year Member Retirees**



Glen & Sue Lindfors



Presidents Samantha Hartwig,
Bill Mechels and Mike Zagaros



Connie Beissel and Ronaele Bolden

2020-21 RED AND GOLD RETIREE BANQUET



Sue, Gordon, Paula and Beth Balfe



Vicki & James Hamilton



Dawn Glewwe, Art & Paul Kujawa and Faith Casciani



Robert Warden & Carrier Doyle



Bonnie, Francis, Florence, Leleen & Cheryl Rice



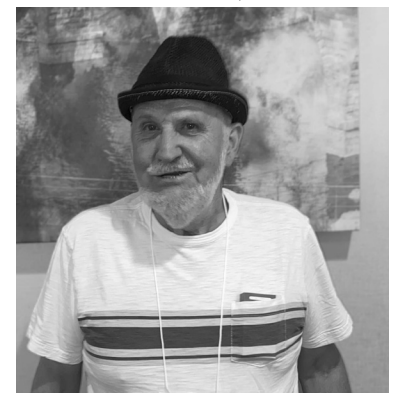
Michael & Mary Mrolsa



Jerry & Marion Broman



Dennita & David Pierson, Ron & Jerri Barker, Heidi & Jack Burmis



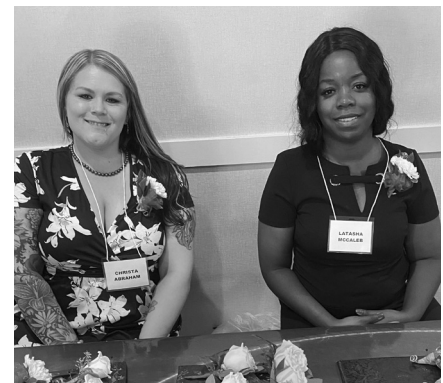
Leonard Rardin



Dave & Bonnie Millette



Brad & Tracee Knutson



Christa Abraham & Latasha McCaleb

IN SOLIDARITY

As a member of the NALC, we hear this phrase a lot: In Solidarity. It is very common to hear this phrase and even more common to see it in letters and articles written by fellow Union members. What does it mean? And, more importantly, what does it mean to us as a Union? The Merriam-Webster dictionary definition of solidarity is: unity (as of a group or class) that produces or is based on community of interests, objectives, and standards.

What does this mean for us as a Union?

Like many of you, I enjoyed watching the 2020 Summer Olympic Games in Tokyo. I liked watching many of the events, but I would have to say that my favorite event to watch was gymnastics. It is amazing to me the level of determination, dedication and teamwork of the athletes that compete. These athletes spend countless hours learning and practicing their skills. Their hard work and dedication is inspirational to countless people around the world.

This summer, the world took notice when Simone Biles withdrew from some of the competitions to focus on her mental health. The countless

hours of training and the dream of making it to the Olympics temporarily side lined because of her mental health. It is hard to imagine how extremely difficult it must have been for her to make this decision.

What was encouraging to me was how her teammates re-acted to her decision. They stood with her in Unity; they stood with her In Solidarity! They supported her with encouraging words, hugs, and confirmed to her that they admired her decision to do what needed to be done, even though it was extremely difficult. What does this have to do with us as Letter Carriers?

I have been a Letter Carrier for almost 16 years now and when I look around, I see a high level of determination, dedication, and teamwork in our craft. I see men and women who have been carrying mail for many years who have spent countless hours learning and perfecting their craft. Like the gymnasts, Letter Carriers hard work and dedication does not go unnoticed. There are countless customers across our country that are appreciative of the work that we do every day.

People may not be glued to their television sets watching Letter

Carriers deliver the mail, but I know there are countless people that will be looking out their windows wondering when their carrier will arrive because they appreciate their Letter Carrier! Unfortunately, Letter Carriers also get sidelined because of injuries. Physical and mental illnesses are not uncommon in our craft. And just as Simone Biles teammates stood with her during her difficult times, we also need to stand shoulder to shoulder with our fellow carriers that are injured. We stand with them In Solidarity! Do you know of a carrier at your station that is struggling with an illness or injury right now? Let them know that you are there for them. Give them an encouraging word if you can. Maybe you're not good at that sort of thing, that's ok, you can still be kind to them and that will go a long way. Is there a carrier at your station that has been out from work for a while? Call them to see how they are doing or even send them a text to let them know you are thinking of them. Most of all let them know that you stand with them In Solidarity!

In Solidarity,
Scott Bultena
Formal A Representative
Branch 9 NALC



**1970 "Wild Cat" Strikers of Branch 9 NALC
2021 Red and Gold Retiree Banquet**

Director of Retirees Report

Volunteering at the State Fair was fun this year, but weird. I staffed the kiosk with Al Gulden in a subdued Labor Pavilion. No hourly raffles, no musicians, and no doughnuts in the back room. But we were visited by House Speaker Melissa Hortman. Since I am from Brooklyn Park like the Speaker, we discussed the recent mayoral race where our guy Winston lost by TWO votes. Think your vote doesn't count?? The best part was talking with many people who love the Post Office. Really. Still. We didn't know there were so many "best ever" carriers out there.

The Social Security COLA for 2022 is being finalized now. The CPI-W index increase will determine the actual amount, but projections are ranging from 5.5 to 6.2%. It is good of course that Social Security is keeping up with inflation. The experts are, however, warning everyone that increases in Medicare Part B premiums will wipe out most, if not all, of this increase. It has been mentioned in this column before that a better index for calculating SS COLAs would be a proposed CPI-E. This Elderly index gives more weight to prescription drugs and other health care costs.

Items of more importance as we age in retirement. There is a Fair COLA for Seniors Act of 2021 (HR 4315) floating in Congress now. Currently 23 Democrats cosponsor it including our own Betty McCollum. It never hurts to let your congress person know your position on Social Security issues.

Recent retirees, those who retired during Covid-19 times, may have contracted the virus while still working. If you did, please file a claim by filing a CA-1 form. Every employee has three years following a traumatic event to file a claim with Workers Compensation. So, if you were diagnosed with Covid-19 by a doctor and have since retired—FILE A CLAIM. Why, you may ask if you seem to have fully recovered with no side effects? There is something called long haulers effects like permanent breathing difficulties or heart damage. There may be some unknown effects that will show up years from now. We just don't know. Filing a claim now, gives you position for assistance, should you develop some now unknown side effects. Our President Sam Hartwig wrote a step-by-step guide on filing a CA-1 online in the last Branch 9.



Melia Derrick

Either of our fulltime officers can help you file your claim. Protect yourself.

We had a successful Red and Gold Retiree Banquet. Thanks to all the attendees! It was good to meet in person and hear the stories of the past year. Pam Donato returned to Minnesota for the event and to receive the Retiree of the Year award. A very deserving recipient. We were able to get a group photo of the 1970 Strikers present which is important. The Union office fire destroyed our Strikers' display, and these pictures can begin the reconstruction process.

Stay Tuned In
Melia Derrick



Ken Jambois

NALC Health Benefits Rep.

Open season dates this year will be November 8 until December 13, 2021. For the year 2022. Open enrollment for health, dental and vision plans. If you would like to make any changes open season is the time to do it. Rate changes have not been announced yet-if there will be any. OPM.gov will be a good resource to compare rates. I will have the announcement date for health, dental and vision in my next article. So please discuss with your family what changes should be made to your health, dental and vision needs and be ready by the open season dates to make changes.

Ken Jambois
NALC Health Benefits representative



Dave Allmann

There are so many different angles to safety. Yet every move we make can result in an injury or accident. An injury or accident has no regards to the timing of when it occurs. Therefore, we must, always be focused. Once that focus is lost, the chances of an accident or injury increases.

I'm guessing that anyone reading that last paragraph is saying "duh". My thoughts are the same. It is so simple that we should not have any accidents or injuries. Yet, looking at the numbers, the accidents and injuries remain high. Being a realist, we will never be accident or injury free. That is due to the nature of our job. However, with working together in creating a good safety culture at your stations will help reduce these accidents.

The vast majority of all our accidents are by carriers with 0-5 years of experience. There are

Safety Liason Report

plenty of reasons why they are having so many problems. Giving the CCA's proper training would be the best place to start. The CCA's get 30 minutes of training every month so that should not be the problem. We continue to mentor CCA's and working with them on developing good safety habits. So that is not the problem. Or is it the problem?

Each CCA is to be given at least 30 minutes of safety training each month. The reality is that they are not getting the 30 minutes. They also find themselves lost in their own world as there has not been a good mentor for them. There are two main reasons why this continues to happen. First, we are seriously understaffed at most stations, and it takes every minute we have just to get the mail delivered. Secondly, Supervisors and Managers simply will not give us the time to properly train the CCA's.

The other issue is that carriers that have 0-5 years of experience make up approximately 20 percent of our work staff. That means that we have 80 percent of carriers with less accidents. If we could get the 80 percent to better help the 20 percent our safety record would improve immensely.

With experience comes a certain amount of safety that just comes naturally. Whether it is driving

the streets on your route, or how tricky a simple walk can be, we see the dangers. For the most part we avoid the dangers. Day after day and year after year, we avoid accidents. It is that experience we need to share with those with less experienced.

But, sometimes with that experience and a clean accident record, we can get a little confident. Sometimes we will do something unsafe and get away with it. But what we do not know is that someone who is less experienced sees that. A CCA may see you and think, "why do I have to, they don't". What kind of example are you setting for others?

I know it will not be easy but together we must help our less experienced carriers. It can be stepping up and mentor them or simply praising them for doing something safely.

In the end, no matter how deep of a hole we are in, let us show that safety is first. Because if we are not safe about doing our job, we are likely to have an accident or become injured.

DA



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

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If fixable we will repair your uniform at no cost to you.
Take waist in/out and change hem length

Ame's Uniforms are a UNION PREFERRED vendor

BRANCH 9 RETIREMENT SEMINAR

Thursday, October 14th, 2021
6:30 PM

COMFORT OF HOME ZOOM

If your email is registered for the GMMs - no need to register again.
If your email is *not* registered, please email: angie@branch9nalc.com

IN PERSON

Crystal VFW
5222 56th Ave. North
Crystal, MN 55429

This seminar is an opportunity for you and your spouse to ask questions and to receive information regarding retirement
Please RSVP to the Branch office at 612-781-9858 or email: angie@branch9nalc.com if you plan on attending.

FREEDOM!!!



**Join Branch 9 for a Farewell
Retirement Party honoring**

Mike Zagaros

Mike's Retirement Party 2nd Try

You didn't miss the party last year when Mike retired as President of Branch 9.
Due to COVID-19 it was postponed -until now.

Friday, October 15 2021
4:30 to 8:00 PM

Crystal VFW
5222 56th Ave. North
Crystal, MN 55429

Please RSVP to the Branch 9 Office at 612-781-9858 or email: angie@branch9nalc.com if you plan on attending.

Branch Nine News
4001 Stinson Blvd. Suite 304
Columbia Heights MN 55421

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Stay informed by:

- *Join Veterans Group <https://www.nalc.org/member-benefits/join-the-nalc-veterans-group>
- * Branch9nalc.com (website)
- * "like" our Branch 9 Facebook Page

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

September 28

General Membership Meeting
7:00PM
ZOOM and in person
Crystal VFW, Crystal, MN
Nomination of
officers and delegates

October 11

Holiday
Columbus Day
Indigenous Peoples' Day

October 12

Steward Meeting
7:00 PM
Zoom/Online

October 14

Retirement Seminar
Crystal VFW, Crystal, MN
6:30PM

October 26

General Membership Meeting
7:00PM
ZOOM and in person
Crystal VFW, Crystal, MN

November 9

Steward Meeting
7:00 PM
Zoom/Online

Most BRANCH 9 Meetings and events have been modified, please continue to check the website and Facebook page for the latest information on Branch 9 meetings and events.

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

Fridley Retiree Lunch

2nd Tuesday of the Month
11:30 AM
Route 47 Pub and Grub
7820 University Ave