

VOLUME 75 No 4

Official Publication of Branch Nine, NALC

May 2023

**2023 Retiree of the Year  
Connie Beissel.**



Connie Beissel Retiree of the Year. Pictured with NALC Assistant Secretary-Treasurer Mack Julion.

**70 Year Member (1953)  
Thomas Ryan**



Thomas Ryan accepting his 70 year member plaque from Br. 9 President JoAnn Gilbaugh and NALC Assistant Secretary-Treasurer Mack Julion.

**Red and Gold Retiree Banquet 2023**



50 Year Members (1973)



55 Year Members (1968)



1970 Postal "Wild Cat" Strikers

...more banquet photos on page 4

## RETIREMENTS



*Dan Levoir (Main Office) last punch with Steward Paul Kujawa Best Wishes!*

## Thank You Veterans!

It was brought to our attention that the Veterans list on the front page of November's Branch 9 News was incomplete. The oversight was not intentional, and we sincerely apologize.

We are proud of the contributions of every one of our military members, and we want to be sure no one is excluded. We've included a list below of those we have been notified were omitted. Thank you for your service:

Dean DuBois  
Phonxay Phonseya  
Gregory Gruman  
Vincent Wyckoff

## NEW MEMBERS

Victoria Ambrezewicz  
John Dalton  
Wade Erickson  
Maxime Groen  
Joshua Keller  
Aaron McPheeters  
Masai Milligan  
Alexander Pauliot  
Jason Schaefer  
Gerald Teevan

The following is a List of Paid Members for March and April 2023

### VERY CONCERNED MEMBERS

Jon Thompson Dale Carney  
Jeff Johnson Tony Winkels  
Randy Paulson Steven Oehlerich  
Francis Rice Thomas Hoban  
Susan Hoban Gerald Bromen  
Connie Beissel Joe Wineman

### MEMBERS

Karen Torell Richard Hobot  
Don Carlson Kevin McCanney  
Curtis Blackwell MaryHoch  
Lawrence Gildner Pat Paplow  
Todd Kunkel Bill Hofstad  
Katherine Duax-Kunkel

Jim Fodstad  
Treasurer PAL 9

## Maximum annual leave carryover amount of 520 hours extended into the 2024 leave year

The NALC and the United States Postal Service have agreed to a memorandum of understanding (M-01993) extending the annual leave carryover limit. Regular work force career employees covered by the USPS-NALC National Agreement may carry over 520 hours of accumulated annual leave from leave year 2023 to leave year 2024. The Memorandum does not change the provisions in the Employee and Labor Relations Manual (ELM) for payment of accumulated leave. This MOU will expire on December 31, 2024.

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### Branch 9 Officers

#### President

Scott Bultena

#### Exec. Vice President

Joseph Tiemann

#### Recording Secretary

Robb Petersburg

#### Treasurer

Christa Abraham

#### Financial Secretary

Stacey Ellingson

#### Editor

Jeremy Rothstein

[branch9news@branch9nalc.com](mailto:branch9news@branch9nalc.com)

#### Sergeant at Arms

Will Mathes

#### Trustees

Ronaele Bolden

Latasha McCaleb

Ryan O'Neill

#### 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

I am grateful and thankful to be the new President of Branch 9. First and foremost, I thank God and my family because without them I know I would not be where I am today. Going forward I know that we are going to be successful. I am confident of our success because we have great people on the Executive Board that have experience and a genuine desire for this Branch to be united and successful. We also have many gifted active members and retirees that so graciously contribute their time and talents to moving this Branch forward. We also have a very gifted office manager, Angie, who takes care of many things for the Branch and cares about the success of our Union.

I come into this position with my eyes wide open. I know that this Branch has recently experienced a person in a leadership position that did not answer their phone calls or follow up with members when they should have...I sincerely apologize for those shortcomings and want you to know that stops now! If you call me or Joe and leave a message or if you email or text us, we will get back to you and help you to the best of our abilities. We work for the members of Branch 9. I believe that the best leaders are servant leaders and that is what we are. We are here to help and assist the membership navigate through the challenges and difficulties that we all face as Letter Carriers.

### Staffing

Staffing is the issue on everyone's mind. The Postal Service just started posting openings for letter carrier positions on Indeed. They are receiving a lot more applications than normal and we have seen an uptick in the number

of new people going through the carrier academy. I am cautiously optimistic that we are on our way to adequately staffed stations. I know this may take some time, but I believe there is light at the end of the tunnel. At regional training which took place at the end of March our National President Brian Renfroe said that we are in a good position at the bargaining table for our new contract for two reasons. First, because of Postal reform the Service no longer has the pre-fund mandate. If this contract goes to arbitration, we are more likely going to receive a better outcome when the Postal Service is not showing monetary losses. Second, the Postal Service cannot sit across the table from Union negotiators and claim that there is not a staffing crisis. Mr. Renfroe thinks we are in a good position to negotiate a fair contract that rewards letter carrier for their hard work and dedication to the American public.

### Safety

I am concerned about the physical and mental wellbeing of our letter carriers. For too long now, letter carriers have been forced to work excessive hours and it is taking a toll on their physical and mental well-being. Please remember, if you are exhausted and you feel that you cannot safely continue to work, please let your supervisor or manager know and go home. Your safety matters more than getting mail and packages out to customers. There are two reasons that you can disobey an order from management, one is if the order puts your safety in jeopardy and the other is if you are asked to do something that is illegal. So again, at the risk of being overly repetitive, if management forces you to carry extra or tries to send



**Scott Bultena**

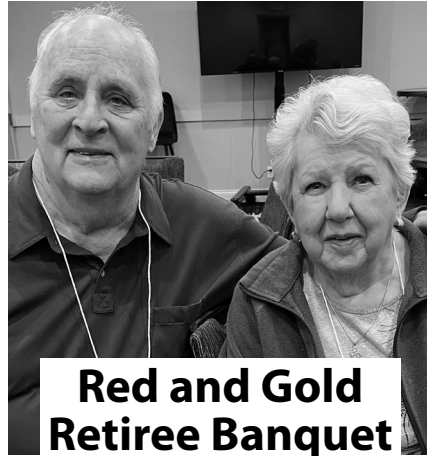
you back out at the end of your day and you do not feel that you can safely do so, do not do the extra or go back out. Let them know that you cannot safely proceed and go home.

### Staying Positive

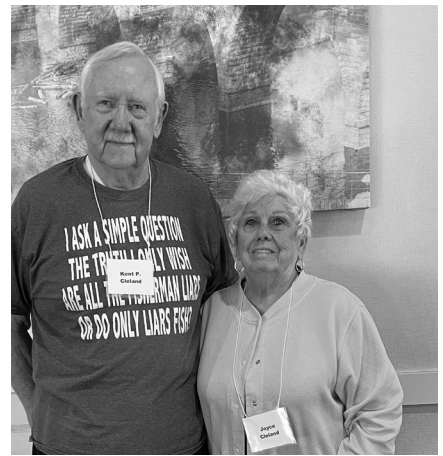
I know that times are tough right now being a letter carrier. I believe we have a strong Union and a good contract. Over the course of the last contract, FTR carriers received \$6698 in cost-of-living adjustments (COLA's). We also received four general wage increases. In April, we joined a rally put on by the metro transit workers downtown. They are fighting for a fair contract and do not receive COLA's as part of their contract. Letter carriers still look forward to a good pension that, along with the TSP and social security, will help provide a good retirement. Not too many employers still have a pension plan for their employees. It is easy to focus on what is wrong with our jobs, but it is in our best interest to try to focus on the things that attracted us to this job in the first place.

In Solidarity, Scott Bultena





**Red and Gold  
Retiree Banquet  
2023**



...more banquet photos on page 6



## Exec. Vice President's Report

Brothers and Sisters,

I was surprised to receive the call from Scott Bultena to see how I felt about becoming the Vice President. I had never considered myself to be in a position such as this and I am honored to be a representative for this union. Here is a brief explanation of my postal career thus far. My family has a long history with the post office. My grandpa, that has since passed on, was a carrier for 30 years (retired for 35 years) and my parents were postal employees until retirement. My career started when my brother Nick and I both applied to become seasonal casual carriers on the same day for the 2004 holiday season. We proceeded to work our 180 days, mine at Loring. The joke has always been that we were fired and hired the same day as when we got home from our 180th day in 2005, we received our letter that we were hired as PTF's.

As a PTF, I was assigned to Lowry station. After a few years of being a regular, some carriers at Lowry convinced me to run as a union steward alongside Joe Tanner when the opportunity presented itself, and we were both elected. There we were, brand new stewards, and our first tasks at hand were route adjustments and a station rebid right in the middle of the WOO (Window Of Operations). It was a very challenging time for all letter carriers, but we got to see the value of the union when we received a settlement that stopped the WOO.

After about 9 years at Lowry, I bid on a utility string at Golden Valley in 2014 right in the middle of route inspections...again. A few months into working there, a mounted utility string opened up and I got

it with only 9 years of seniority. I couldn't believe it. This was a time when you needed 20+ years to get a mounted route. I started to notice things that management was getting away with on a daily basis and decided to run for the union steward vacancy at this station and was elected.

In 2021, Nate Serie nominated me to become a trustee, which was unexpected, but I decided to go ahead and run for the position. I was honored to be elected and take on a bigger role in the branch. Being a trustee really expanded my viewpoint about how the branch was run.

My wife Jenn and I moved to Ham Lake in 2021 so I bid to Blaine to be closer to home. I continued my career as a union steward at Blaine, started the trustee position, and continued my work as a full-time letter carrier.

The branch has seen many changes in the last few years and as mail carriers we face new challenges. There are systemic problems in the post office that need to be addressed, one big problem being the lack of staff. The staffing issues cause a plethora of problems, which you are all well aware of, and these issues need to be addressed. I have been an overtime hound my entire career, but when I bid to Blaine, I decided to take the foot off the gas pedal for a little while to experience working my assignment and eventually the 8-hour list. By the time I bid on the 8-hour list, it seemed like we were all getting forced just as much as the ODL.

I understand the amount of stress this job can put on any carrier on any given day. I also realize that I am entering this role as an ap-

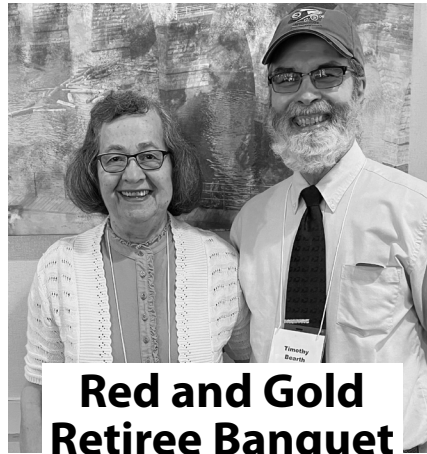


**Joseph Tiemann**

pointed officer, and not elected, but I really do believe that the goal should be to ensure a stress-free environment for everyone, everyday. This is an extremely large mountain to climb at this point, but this is the ultimate goal.

When the news broke that I accepted the position, I had a lot of people reach out and offer support, which helped calm the nerves. I want to say thanks to JoAnn for all the years of service to the branch and wish her a happy retirement. Congratulations to Scott for stepping into the role of becoming the president and thank you for the opportunity to come up and help serve all the members. I believe that we have a great team on the E board and am very grateful for all the help and support they have offered me with this transition. Looking forward to getting out there and meeting all the members.





**Red and Gold  
Retiree Banquet  
2023**





# Director of Retirees Report

There was a lot of fun to be had at the MDA bowl a thon. A big thank you to the organizers and all the bowlers and their families. It was amazing to see so many carriers enjoying time together, forgetting the stress of work and raising money for the kids affected with Muscular Dystrophy. Bob Baird organized a retiree team that included him, myself, Renee Hickerson, Craig Hanschen and his son Brian when someone else dropped out. Many thanks to them for a fun night. While not official, my tour of the lanes showed that we had some competitive scores that night. I will state for a fact that we all scored over a hundred each game.

Some people are insisting on worrying early (and I guess often) about the health care insurance changes coming in 2025. The Postal Reform Act of 2022 began the process by which all postal annuities and their families would switch from FEHB to PSHB (Postal Service Health Benefits) plans. This is a new, separate program under the FEHB umbrella. The choices should mirror current FEHB plans and must include Self Only, Self Plus One and Self and Family options. For instance, if you have

the NALC Self Plus One healthcare plan, the NALC will provide that as a PSHB plan. Simple. During the Open Season in 2024, the PSHB plan options and premiums will be available to examine and choose. This will require action on your part to actively change to a PSHB plan. Should you fail to make a PSHB choice, you will be automatically enrolled in a plan offered by the health carrier that you were enrolled in during 2024. So, you won't lose health insurance. The actuarial analysis of the new PSHB program initially found that it should lower average costs of coverage and therefore



plan premiums. We shall see. The really big opportunity comes to those retirees who never signed up for Medicare Part B when they became eligible. On April 1,



**Melia Derrick**

2024, a Special Enrollment Period will begin. For six months, these retirees signing up for Medicare Part B can enroll with no penalty. You are not required to enroll and you will have to pay the monthly premiums. Note: If you signed up for, but later dropped Part B, you are not eligible for this SEP. NALC.org has posted the latest Office of Personnel Management information on their website. Yes, lots of education/information on this subject will be coming. But no panic now, please.

Congratulations to Connie Beissel, our Retiree of the Year (Pictured left). She did fantastic Union and political work when she was an active carrier and has continued those efforts in her retirement.

Stay tuned in  
Melia Derrick



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

## AME'S UNIFORMS

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# Ron St. Clair MDA Bowl-a-thon 2023



Teams Lost Lake/Loring



Team Lake Street



Team Lake Street Part 2



Richfield / Retiree Teams



Team Lowry



Team Zone 4/54



Scott, Dillon, Joe and Nick



Team Elmwood



# Ron St. Clair MDA Bowl-a-thon 2023



MDA Ambassador Jordan Goodman w/JoAnn and Ronaele



Team Brooklyn Center



Team Powderhorn

## Workers Memorial Day Service

We had a wonderful turnout for our Workers Memorial Day service. The rain held off during the service. Standing around the memorial we created are a few union members along with Dakota County Senator Robert Biermann, Representative John Hout, County Commissioner Mary Hammon Roland, Apple Valley City Administrator Tom Lawell and Cemetery Advisor Alan Nesbit in attendance. The Labor Chorus sang for us at the event. St Paul RLF President Kera Peterson and Political Organizer Colleen Nocerini joined us as well as Chaplain Peter Stebinger who said a prayer. Don Slaten played Taps on a bugle as we took a moment of silence for the 51 workers who lost their lives on the job last year in Minnesota.

Connie Beissel  
Retired Carrier  
Chair of Dakota County Labor  
Assembly (DCLA)  
Vice President of the St. Paul  
Regional Labor Federation  
(SPRLF)



# United States Postal Service

## FACT SHEET

### Postal Service Health Benefits (PSHB)

#### USPS EMPLOYEES

The Postal Service Reform Act of 2022 (PSRA) was signed into law in April 2022. Since then, the Office of Personnel Management (OPM), in conjunction with the Postal Service, has been working to implement a new Postal Service Health Benefits (PSHB) Program, as required under the new law. PSHB is a new, separate program within the Federal Employees Health Benefits (FEHB) Program and will be administered by OPM. Coverage under the PSHB Program will be effective January 1, 2025. Below is a list of facts regarding the PSHB Program for active employees:

1. You are required to select a health insurance plan in the PSHB Program during the 2024 open season period, from November 11, 2024 – December 9, 2024.
2. PSHB plan options and premium information will be available in October 2024.
3. OPM will launch a new enrollment platform for health insurance. Information on how to make elections using the new system will be available prior to the 2024 open season.
4. If you are an **active employee age 64 or older as of January 1, 2025**, you ARE NOT required to enroll in Medicare Part B to continue your PSHB health insurance coverage once you retire. However, upon your retirement and entitlement to Medicare Part A (typically at age 65), you will have the option to enroll in Medicare Part B during a special enrollment period.
  - If you are the primary subscriber, your covered family members will not be required to enroll in Medicare Part B to stay on your PSHB plan; however, enrollment in Medicare Part B may reduce your overall costs for health care-related expenses and may provide better value for you and your family.
5. If you are an **active employee under the age of 64 as of January 1, 2025**, to continue your PSHB health insurance coverage in retirement, you WILL BE required to enroll in Medicare Part B after you retire and become entitled to Medicare Part A (typically at age 65).
  - If you are the primary PSHB enrollee, your covered family members will also be required to enroll in Medicare Part B when you retire, upon their entitlement to Medicare Part A, if they wish to remain covered by your PSHB insurance.
  - If you **retire on or after January 1, 2025, and you are under 64**, you WILL BE required to enroll in Medicare Part B when you become entitled to Medicare Part A (typically at age 65) to remain enrolled in a PSHB plan. The Social Security Administration (SSA) will mail you a notice when you are eligible to enroll in Medicare Part B during your initial enrollment period. Your initial enrollment period starts three months prior to your 65th birthday and ends three months after your 65th birthday. If you are the primary PSHB subscriber, your covered family members will also be required to enroll in Medicare Part B upon their entitlement to Medicare Part A, if they wish to remain covered by your PSHB insurance.
6. There are exceptions to the requirement to enroll in Medicare Part B as an annuitant. These exceptions will also apply to your covered family members. Annuitants may be responsible for providing proof of eligibility for the applicable exception(s) to the designated agency. These exceptions are:
  - You are residing outside of the United States and its territories. You are required to follow the policy and procedure set forth by the Postal Service to be eligible for this exception; or
  - You are enrolled in health care benefits provided by the Department of Veterans Affairs; or
  - You are eligible for health services provided by Indian Health Services.
7. As a general rule, spousal and family member PSHB coverage is based on the primary enrollee's eligibility. If the primary subscriber is required to enroll in Medicare Part B, dependent family members will also be required to enroll when they are eligible.



# United States Postal Service

## FACT SHEET

### Postal Service Health Benefits (PSHB)

#### USPS ANNUITANTS

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1. You are required to select a health insurance plan in the PSHB Program during the 2024 open season period, from November 11, 2024 – December 9, 2024.
2. PSHB plan options and premium information will be available in October 2024.
3. OPM will launch a new enrollment platform for health insurance. Information on how to make elections using the new system will be available prior to the 2024 open season.
4. If you are an **annuitant as of January 1, 2025, and not currently participating in Medicare Part B**, you ARE NOT required to enroll in Medicare Part B to continue your health insurance coverage in the new PSHB Program. Participation in Medicare Part B is voluntary; however, enrollment in Medicare Part B may reduce your overall costs for health care-related expenses and may provide greater value.
  - a) Your covered spouse and eligible family members will also not be required to enroll in Medicare Part B even if they are age 65 or older; however, enrollment in Medicare Part B may reduce overall costs for health care-related expenses and may provide greater value.
  - b) **Note:** If you are an **annuitant as of January 1, 2025, and are already enrolled in Medicare Part B**, you ARE required to remain enrolled in Medicare Part B to continue coverage under PSHB.
5. If you are an **annuitant entitled to Medicare Part A (typically at age 65) prior to January 1, 2024, and have not enrolled in Medicare Part B**, you and your covered, eligible family members may be able to participate in the special enrollment period (SEP) for Medicare Part B that starts on April 1, 2024. Those who enroll during the SEP will not need to pay the late enrollment penalty. Eligibility letters will be sent to annuitants and eligible family members in early 2024.
6. If you **retire between October 31, 2024, and December 31, 2024, and are entitled to Medicare Part A (typically at age 65)**, you will have the option to enroll in Medicare Part B during a specific eight-month special enrollment period immediately following your retirement date. If you wish to enroll, you **MUST** contact the Social Security Administration (SSA) to initiate enrollment if you are over the age of 65.
7. As a general rule, spousal and family member PSHB coverage is based on the primary subscriber's eligibility. If the primary subscriber is not required to join Medicare Part B, neither will dependent family members. Likewise, if you qualify for the SEP, so will your covered family members.

#### Looking Ahead

Benefits can change over time. Annuitants are encouraged to review available plans each year and stay abreast of health insurance options.

Additional information will be communicated in the coming months. You can also visit or contact us via any of the following methods:

Online – <https://www.keepingposted.org>



[www.OPM.gov](http://www.OPM.gov)

Email – [retirementbenefits@usps.gov](mailto:retirementbenefits@usps.gov)

[PostalRetireeHealthBenefits@opm.gov](mailto:PostalRetireeHealthBenefits@opm.gov)

Mail – 475 L'Enfant Plaza SW  
Suite 9670  
Washington, DC 20260

Fax – 202-268-3337

Accessibility – Federal Relay Service: 1-800-877-8339

You can also receive information and updates by signing up for our text messaging notifications by texting "PSHBP" to 39369.

*It is not the intent of this document to amend or conflict with the provisions of 5 U.S.C. chapter 89, 5 C.F.R. part 890, or the collective bargaining agreements between the Postal Service and its labor unions, nor with provisions of the Employee and Labor Relations Manual (ELM). The specific benefits authorized for an employee covered by a collective bargaining agreement are determined by the terms of that agreement, or the ELM.*

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- \* 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](http://nalc.org/government-affairs/political-activity)

## **Branch 9 Calendar**

### **May 9**

Steward Meeting  
7:00 PM  
Crystal VFW, Crystal, MN

### **June 13**

Steward Meeting  
7:00 PM  
Crystal VFW, Crystal, MN

### **May 13**

Stamp Out Hunger  
NALC Food Drive

### **June 19**

Juneteenth  
Holiday

### **May 23**

General Membership Meeting  
7:00PM  
Crystal VFW, Crystal, MN  
*Scholarship Drawing*

### **June 27**

General Membership Meeting  
7:00PM  
Crystal VFW, Crystal, MN

### **May 29**

Memorial Day  
Holiday

### **July 4**

Independence Day  
Holiday

### **July 11**

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

### **Fridley Retiree Lunch**

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