



BRANCH NINE NEWS

"AN INJURY TO ONE IS AN INJURY TO ALL"

1964

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June/July 2026

The Last Mile: Climate Change on the Front Lines of Mail Delivery

By Andrew Hagan

For letter carriers, the "last mile" is no longer just a logistical term, it has become a gauntlet. As global temperatures climb and weather patterns turn erratic, the men and women who deliver the nation's mail are facing a workplace that is increasingly hostile.

The physical demands of being a letter carrier are legendary, but climate change has added a lethal layer to the job. In many parts of the country, "extreme heat" is no longer a seasonal rarity but a seasonal constant. Carriers often operate in vehicles (specifically LLVs) that lack air conditioning, where interior temperatures can soar well above 100°F (38°C).

Sir David Attenborough, a lifelong advocate for the natural world, has long warned that the consequences of our inaction are no longer distant threats. During his address at COP26, he noted:

"The people most affected by climate change are no longer some imagined future generation, but young people alive today... We are after all, the greatest problem solvers to have ever existed on Earth."

For a letter carrier walking twelve miles in a heatwave, those words ring with immediate urgency. They are the "young people alive today" witnessing the destabilization of their working environment in real-time.

The NALC is not merely observing these changes; they are actively bargaining for a future that prioritizes worker safety in a warming climate. As we move through 2026, the union has focused on several key pillars to mitigate the climate crisis and its impact on carriers:

- **Fleet Modernization:** The NALC has been a vocal proponent of the USPS move toward Electric Vehicles (EVs). Unlike the vintage LLVs, the new Next Generation Delivery Vehicles (NGDVs) are equipped with modern air conditioning and ergonomic improvements.

- **Heat Safety Standards:** The union is pushing for stricter, legally binding heat safety protocols. This includes "acclimatization" periods for new carriers and the right to take "comfort stops" in air-

(Continued on Page 11)

Congratulations



Retiree of the Year - Jim Hamilton

Congratulations



70 Year Member - Kenneth Johnson

The Good Guys and Gals Who Revolted



1970 Strikers

Retirements



Amy Ottem retires from Coon Rapids Station with over 36 years of service

Announcements

- The 2023-2026 National Agreement ended on May 22, 2026. There is a mandatory 60-day mediation period lasting 60 days from the end of the contract, more information to come.
- This year's Bowl-A-Thon raised \$7,169 for MDA.
- A standing motion was passed at the May GMM re-asserting a policy that no alcohol should be consumed during the meeting.

Branch 9 NALC

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Nate Serie

Trustees

Jorge Quintero

Zoe Bunzli

Alex Pouliot

Dir of Retirees

Vince Froelich

Health Benefits Rep

Susan Becker

Welcome New Branch Niners

Robert Engesether

Kevin Jargo

Logan Kern

Brendon Mulvaney

Stephen Neufville

Noah Rector

Ryan Seitz

Brayden Waldinger

Join the NALC Veteran's Group



MSALC Convention Details

Sugar Lake Lodge
Cohasset, MN

Golf: 11:00 AM Sunday 10/4

Meetings: Mon 10/5 to 10/6

Banquet Tuesday Night

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

Send articles to:

branch9news@branch9nalc.com

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



Thank You PAL 9 Contributors

Very Concerned Members (\$50 or more)

- Jeffrey Stanko
- Jan Wild
- Pam Donato
- Connie Beissel
- Michael Spurbeck
- Joe Wineman
- Debbie Grunnes
- Tim Bedor
- Kelly Lundgren
- Anthony Winkels

Concerned Members

- Lori Randolph
- Robert Masuda
- Bruce Roepke
- Scott Randolph
- Dale Forde
- Sara Harris
- James Harris
- Paul Skarman

Did you know?

If you attend 18 out of 24 General Membership Meetings between national NALC Conventions, you are eligible to have your travel expenses, lodging, and per diem paid by the branch? Branch 9 is able to send up to 100 delegates to the National Convention that is held every two years, with the next one being in Los Angeles in 2026. Members will hear updates from National Leadership, vote on constitutional and general resolutions, hear appeals from branches all over the country, and hear from a variety of national political figures and labor leaders. Members from all over the US and it's territories come together to share their ideas and build comradery.

The NALC National Convention will be in downtown Minneapolis in 2028!

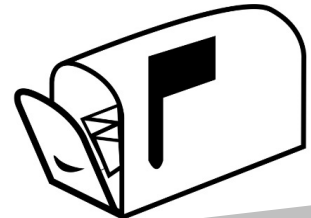
Get out the Vote!

The Minneapolis Labor Federation invites candidates for elected positions to interview and earn their endorsement based on their stances on labor's most important issues. Check out their voter guide below. November will be here before we know it.



IN MEMORIAM

Keith Brakke
Martin "Marty" Cornell



MOVING?

Please notify the branch directly when you move, we are not notified otherwise!

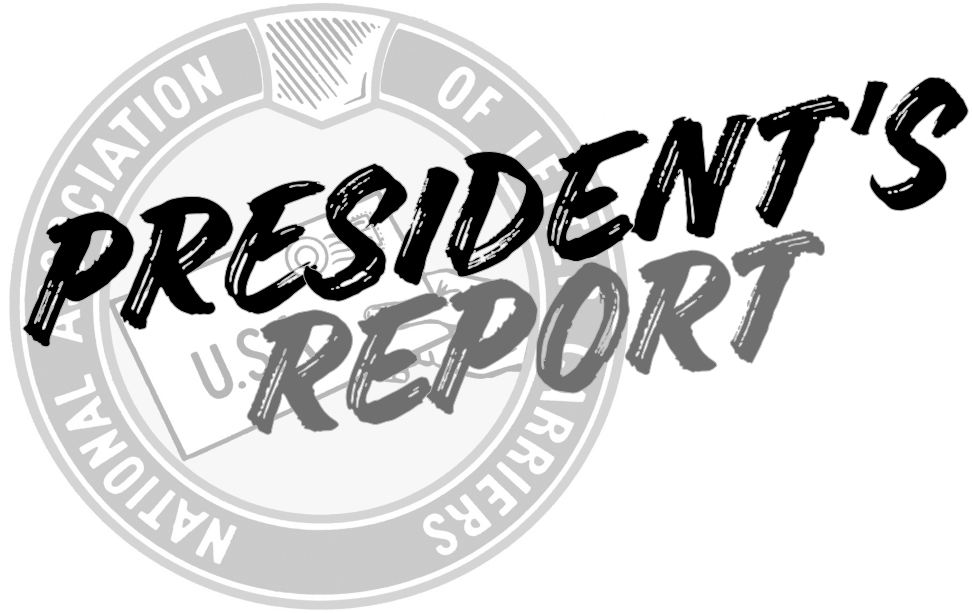
Mail us notification of your new address to:

5831 Cedar Lake Road
South

St. Louis Park, MN 55416

or call

(612) 781-9858



Joe Rian

Each year, NALC fights to fend off attacks in Congress that threaten letter carriers' collective-bargaining rights, retirement benefits and livelihood. We've been successful so far, and we want to continue helping to elect House and Senate candidates who will protect us, promote our issues and deliver our message to Washington.

Since union dues can't be used to support candidates for political office, NALC relies 100 percent on member contributions to the Letter Carrier Political Fund (LCPF), which helps us support those on Capitol Hill who defend the issues that matter most to us.

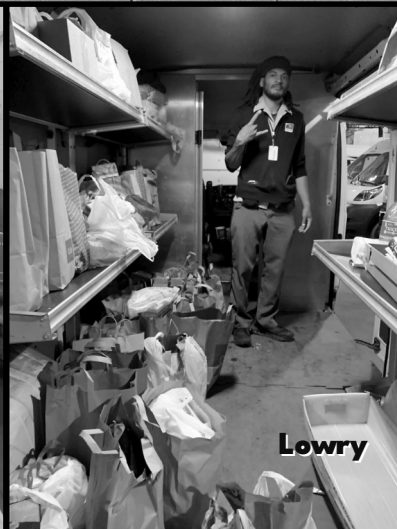
One of my strongest legislative hopes is passage the Federal Retirement Fairness Act HR 1522. This bill would finally recognize the service many letter carriers already gave in non-career positions by allowing that time to count toward retirement under FERS. It would let employees make catch-up contributions for time worked as CCAs, TEs, and other eligible non-career roles after Dec. 31, 1988. For carriers who did the work, earned the time, and kept the mail moving, this is a matter of basic fairness and long-overdue retirement justice.

The current non-career workforce model in the city letter craft has failed too many dedicated carriers. Passage of HR 1522 would help more than 1,000 active Branch 9 members receive retirement credit for their CCA and TE time. Just as important, Minnesota Representatives Betty McCollum, Ilhan Omar, and Angie Craig are already cosponsors of the bill, showing that this issue has strong support close to home. We should keep building that support until every carrier gets the retirement credit they have earned.

On the other hand, I strongly oppose the SAVE Act, also known as the SAVE America Act, which passed the House and remains under debate in the Senate. The bill has drawn broad criticism because it would make voting more difficult and would undermine vote-by-mail, one of the Postal Service's most essential public services. Voting by mail is safe, secure, and vital to a healthy democracy. The NALC is right to keep fighting to protect Americans' access to mail-in ballots. I urge all our members to support U.S. Senate candidates in Minnesota who will oppose this legislation and defend voting by mail for eligible voters in every state.

As you know, NALC and USPS did not reach agreement on a new national contract before the current agreement expired on May 22, 2026. However, the existing contract remains in full effect until a new negotiated or arbitrated agreement takes effect. The parties are now in the federally required 60-day mediation period, and if no agreement is reached, unresolved issues will move to binding interest arbitration before a neutral arbitrator. What happens next will have real consequences for letter carriers' wages, working conditions, and future at the Postal Service. That is why it is so important for members to stay informed, stay engaged, and stand united as this process moves forward. The NALC National Convention this August will be an important moment for debate, accountability, and leadership as our union determines the best path ahead.

As contract negotiations continue, remember the value of the work you do every day. You provide an essential public service that people depend on. Wear your uniform proudly and know that each day, you help keep America working for America.



70,659

This is the number of pounds of food collected in this year's food drive. Well done Branch Niners! We haven't gotten back to where we were pre-covid, but next year will be bigger and better. Thank you!



EXEC VICE PRESIDENT'S REPORT



Chris Pennock

There's a saying that Management would rather climb a tree and tell a lie, than stand on the ground and tell the truth. We're seeing a lot of that these days. Be skeptical of the things that Management is telling you, if you don't know that what they're selling is the truth, ask a senior carrier at your station, talk to your steward or call the Branch.

I was recently in a job discussion where an experienced route count and inspection Management representative told a carrier that he should "drop and go" for any packages that didn't fit into the mailbox. The carrier had been providing good customer service by knocking on the door or ringing the doorbell and waiting a bit to see if the customer would come to the door. Management didn't like that this was adding time to his inspection, and they decided to try and cheat this carrier out of time on his route. The M-41 Handbook provides for how we handle parcels and reads in part:

631.1 Determine if someone is available at the address by ringing the doorbell or knocking on the door.

631.2 While waiting for a customer to respond, scan the parcel to verify whether:

a. A receipt is required. b. Postage due or other charges are to be

collected. c. A return receipt is requested. d. Delivery is restricted. e. The carrier release endorsement is used.

This supervisor also stated that the M-41 handbook is antiquated, and that we don't follow that anymore. That is not how this works! Some of our agreements or handbooks are old, but they are the controlling documents. We even have national grievance settlements from the 1970s that are still in full force.

We're filing a grievance on this issue and will fight to get that time put back in. I also want everyone to know that this is a part of our job, and something we do get credit for during route inspections. We provide good customer service by taking the time to do the job right, and the public loves us for it.

Management also can't seem to help but lie when they say that everyone needs an eight-hour day per week. This is only partially true. Management would violate the contract if a carrier not on the ODL didn't get one eight hour day per week. But this rule absolutely does not apply to carriers on the ODL. Carriers on the ODL must work up to the 12/60 limits before anyone is forced to do off-assignment OT. Over the last several months we've seen a lot of grievances where Management either gave ODL carriers an unnecessary eight hour day or left the ODL at home and then forced

the station. We've been hammering them with grievances and it's costing them thousands upon thousands of dollars in payouts. Some good news is that we're hearing from the stations that Management is now more likely to work ODL carriers instead of improperly forcing because of the pressure we've put on them.

One last lie, I was at a station today where the supervisor had everyone punch over to 632 meeting time for the morning standup. They're lying about that; standups are 722 time. They're trying to cheat on the time it really takes to run a station.

If they're lying to you laugh in their face and give them hell. Management just cares about the numbers, and we have to push them to allow us to provide actual service to our customers. We can fight back against Management's assault on our contract; organize with your co-workers to push back on the things they're doing, file grievances, join the fight for the right to strike, or become a steward or alternate steward.

Check out Tyler Vasseur's appearance on the From A to Arbitration Podcast





2026 SCHOLARSHIP WINNERS

Walter E. Couillard/Eugene P McNulty Scholarship - \$2000

	Name	School Attending	Parent	Work Location
WINNER	Ashton Welter	Anoka Ramsey	Michael Peterson	Anoka
1st RUNNER-UP	Gage Wolfe	Unknown	Crystal Spiel	Brooklyn Center
2nd RUNNER-UP	Jared Flores	Augsburg	Ignacio Flores	T Burnett

Jerome J. Keating/Austin B Carlson Scholarship - \$2000

	Name	School Attending	Parent	Work Location
WINNER	Alex Flaten	UND	Brian Flaten	Blaine
1st RUNNER-UP	Ashton Welter	Anoka Ramsey	Michael Peterson	Anoka
2nd RUNNER-UP	Henry Vo	Unknown	Hieu Vo	Loring

J. Wesley Woods Scholarship - \$1000

	Name	School Attending	Parent	Work Location
WINNER	Ian Dupree	U of MN	Ryan Dupree	Fridley
1st RUNNER-UP	Gina Lewandowski	U of MN	Joseph Lewandowski	Eastside
2nd RUNNER-UP	Ashton Welter	Anoka Ramsey	Michael Peterson	Anoka

Leonard A. Larson/Barry J. Weiner - Adult Scholarship - \$1000

	Name	Carrier Position	Work Location
1st WINNER	Samantha Hartwig	Active	NBA Region 7 Office
2nd WINNER	Charles Rivers	Retired	



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

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Larry Blesi - 65 Year Member

Thank you to everyone who came out and made this year's event special.

Congratulations to this year's Retiree of the Year Jim Hamilton whose service to the community, to his union brothers and sisters and the USPS has touched the lives of countless people.



Joe Bedor - 50 Year Member

Special congratulations to Kenneth Johnson who reached the milestone of 70 years of membership. Talk about dedication, still in great shape, too.

President Renfroe took a picture with all the 1970 strikers who came. He noted that he'd never seen so many strikers from a single branch in one room for a retiree celebration. It was really an honor for our branch to have them in attendance.



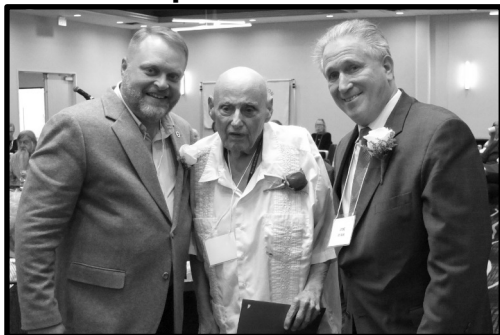
Michael Mrosla - 55 Year Member



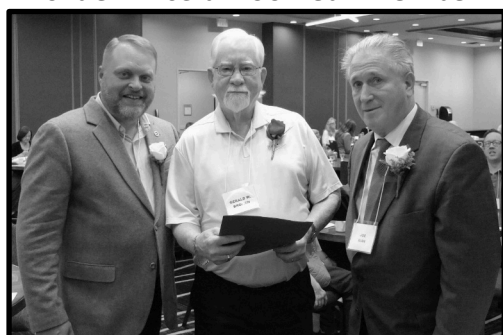
David Thompson - 65 Year Member

We'll keep fighting to keep the rights to a better workplace and higher pay that the 1970 strikers earned for us so many years ago.

-Joe Rian



Richard Hanson - 60 Year Member



Gerald Broman - 60 Year Member

**Also Honored:
50 Years (1976)**

- Steve Boice
- Mary Knoss
- Phillip Pearson

**55 Years (1971)
60 Years (1966)**

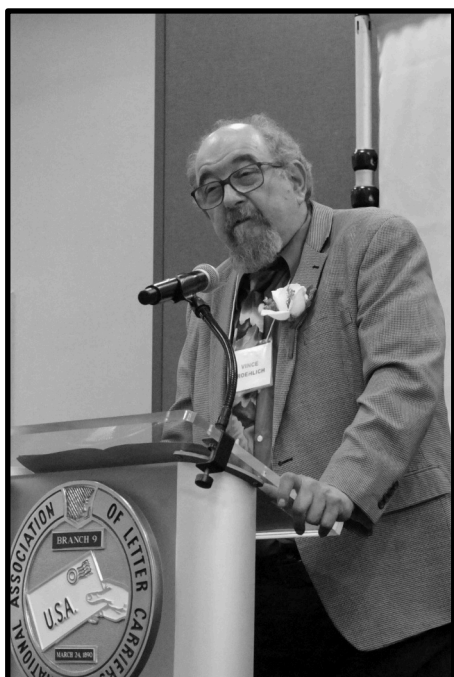
- Glenn Lindfors
- Dennis Bahn
- Ronald Barker
- Robert Moenig
- George Skrbich

65 Years (1961)

- Anthony Kruse
- Robert Logelin
- Robert Masuda

70 Years (1956)

- Marlin Holm



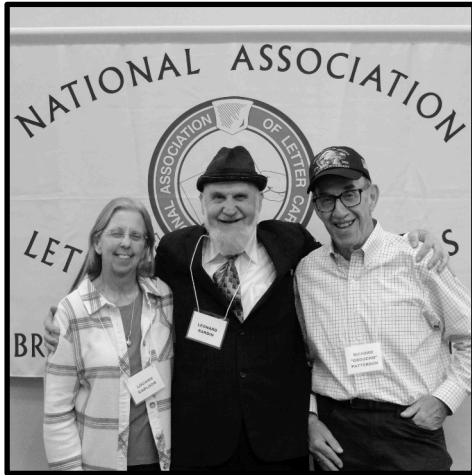
Director of Retirees - Vince Froelich



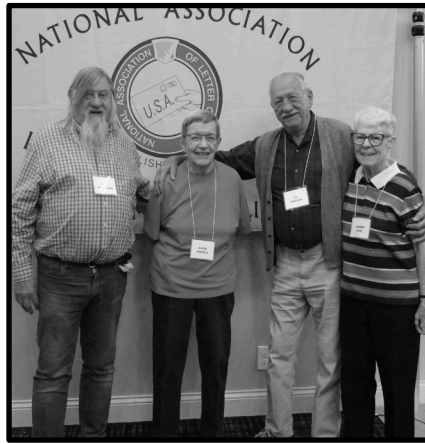
Herman Weidner - 60 Year Member



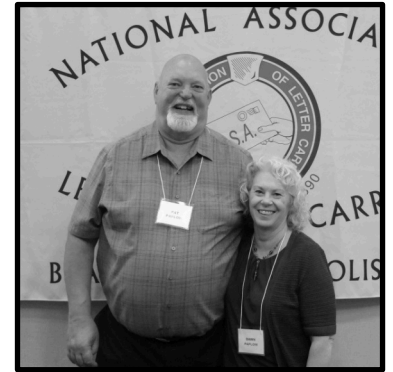
Vernon Zierman - 60 Year Member



Louann Carlson, Leonard Rardin, and Richard "Groucho" Patterson



Dale Steinberg, Alice Nopola, Al Gulden and Joanne Hart



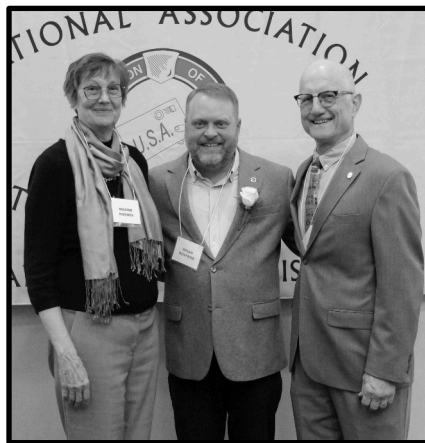
Pat and Dawn Paplow



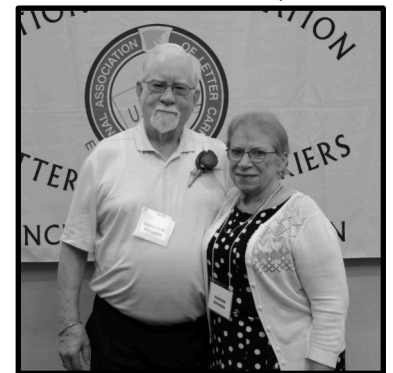
Mr & Mrs Kent Cleland



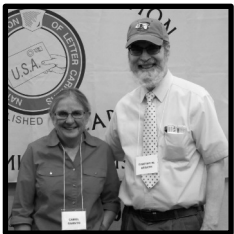
Larry Blesi, Roger Harwarth and John Frick



Maxine Hughes, Brian Refroe, and Kieran Hughes



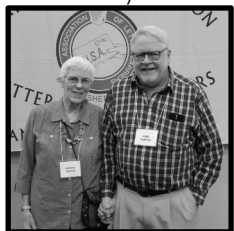
Gerald and Marion Bromen



Carol Garnto and Timothy Bearth



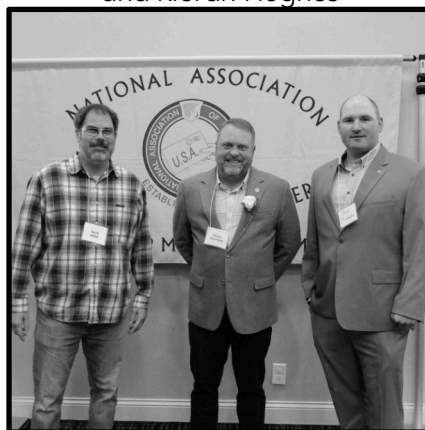
Mary and Michael Mroska



Donna Refior and Joel Carter



Mary Hargreaves and Theresa Oelrich



Nate Serie, Brian Renfro, and Joe Tiemann



Ellie and William Tuffs



Bob and Ann Baird with Vicki and Jim Hamilton



Patrick Johnson, Chris Pennock, Brian Renfro, Joe Rian, Joe Tiemann, and Vince Froelich



Guests filling their plates at the buffet

Spotlight on Pride

By Tim Bash and Jorge Quintero-Troetch



Recently I sat down with Trustee Jorge Quintero-Trotesch to talk about the LGBTQ Committee, the labor movement, and life as a letter carrier. Hope you all enjoy the conversation.

T: Tell me a little about yourself, what got you involved in the union?

J: I've been a union kid my whole life. My mom was part of a labor union in Chicago. I have been a part of the movement, even when I didn't know I was a part of the movement, because of the United Farm Workers. There has always been a healthy supply of immigrant Farm Workers crossing the border every day. They get paid sub-minimum wages to pick the food that we eat. They pay taxes on those wages, but they don't see the benefits from the tax system. I think at the height of it, before this administration started, Immigrants were contributing something like 125 billion dollars in taxes. Did they get health care from that? No. Did they see the benefits of everything that the tax system affords? No. You and I have access to that system, but they contribute and don't get any benefits.

I carry a route in Richfield now, but I started working at Powderhorn Station during Covid. I'd just been unemployed for eight months, and I was thinking about how I could help. At that point, mail carriers had been labeled essential. Unless you were a first responder or deemed essential, you were at home because people were dying in large numbers. We

thought that people were getting infected by just breathing the air. I had to find a way to help my community. So, I applied for a job at the post office and got it. I realized quickly how toxic the environment was at our station. I'm sure if it was happening at Powderhorn, it was happening at all the other stations.

When started at Richfield, I saw the way that Joe Rian ran that station as a shop steward. He genuinely cared about the working conditions there. He knew how hard that was on people when they come back from delivering a full route and then have to take three hours out again. Joe approached me and

asked what I was unhappy about and helped me put it into the form of a motion. I didn't know what a motion was. So, he invited me to my first GMM and I saw that there are people that are trying to make a difference and make the working conditions better for all of us. I thought I needed to be a part of this, because I also disagree with the way employees are being treated, and I disagree with the disparity between pay scales.

Then I really got to dig my heels in and become a part of the process. I started going to meetings, writing motions, even sending up a grievance, which I had no idea how to do. Sitting down and

writing it out on paper is cathartic process. It allows you to organize your thoughts and organize how you move through the workday.

T: So you've taken on the task of building up the LGBTQ Committee, what is the purpose of the committee?

J: The purpose of the committee is visibility, establishing a place where genderqueer or LGBTQ people can go to address issues specific to us. I want to provide a space where someone can come up and say, "you know, what? I had this really terrible thing happen to me. A manager yelled a slur at me," or "you know, my manager said, some sexist, horrible thing to me, and I don't know what to do about it."

I think when we talk about the post office and its queer community, that doesn't mean just people who are gay at the post office. Queer means people that live a different lifestyle who are flexible in their thinking, who allow for other people to exist. That's what queer is, you know? I've found there's queer people everywhere.

However, the Post Office is a boy's club, and it's very difficult to feel comfortable reporting certain incidents. Some people might laugh at you and just shrug it off. It's hard to convey that someone has insulted you in a way that makes it difficult for you to come to work the next morning and do your job.

I've started to notice more queer people coming to the GMM. There's no secret handshake, there's no password that we say to each other, but we know we're there. Living my life as a queer person and being out, I think that helps people. You have to be able to recognize yourselves in society and in organizations like the Post Office that are so heteronormative. It's important



Jorge Quintero-Trotesch - Trustee

Tim Bash - Editor

for members to see representations of their identity in the union. I also want the committee to be a place where we can have a little fun, and I know that right now we're in the fight of our lives. That's why the Bowl-A-Thon and the Red & Gold Banquet are great events. Anytime that we can come together outside of the fight is really crucial. So that's where I'm starting.

T: What kind of unique challenges do queer carriers face that others don't?



J: I think because of the way that the administration has made queer 'other' again. They've ostracized the trans community. I know of a carrier in Brooklyn Center that quit because she's trans and she couldn't hide it. I can't hide that I'm queer. I have gay voice, you know, I can't hide that. I think those are the challenges because we are out in all parts of Minnesota, sometimes delivering to people that immediately identify you as queer. Since the administration has made it a negative thing, they immediately think it's okay to berate you or treat you differently. As queer people, we must flip the script on them and let them know that even though they have this idea about who we are, we're here providing a service that they wouldn't have if we were gone. So that's the real challenge, right? Taking all of the negative ideas that people have about our existence and our way of life and letting them know that we're just regular people. We provide a

service. We just want to do the job and go home and be with our families, eat dinner, go to sleep, wake up, and do it all over again.

T: What can carriers who aren't member of the queer community do to show support for members who are in their stations?

J: I think if you see an injustice, or if you see someone being berated or called a slur, that presents a perfect opportunity for you to stand up for them. I would love for people to show up a little more for us, because we're just like you. So, I would say if you are not a part of the queer community and you want to be an ally, show up and raising your voice when you see an injustice happening, I think that's it.

T: How would someone become involved in the committee?

J: Come and talk to me, I love to chat. Otherwise contact the branch directly.

(Continued From Front Page)

conditioned spaces without fear of disciplinary action.

• **Advocacy Against Funding Cuts:** As recently as early 2026, the NALC has fought legislative attempts to reclaim funds designated for USPS electric vehicle infrastructure, arguing that these investments are vital for both the planet and the health of the workforce.

The struggle of the letter carrier is a microcosm of the global climate challenge. It is a battle of infrastructure against environment, and policy against physical limits. Attenborough reminds us that while the situation is dire, the solution is within our grasp if we act collectively:

"We now understand this problem. We know how to stop the number rising and put it in reverse... We must recapture billions of tons of

carbon from the air. We must fix our sights."

For the NALC and the USPS, "fixing our sights" means transitioning to a zero-emission fleet and ensuring that the person delivering your mail doesn't have to risk their life to do it. The "last mile" of mail delivery may be getting harder, but through union advocacy and systemic change, it doesn't have to be a dead end.



At the May GMM, City Safety Captain Dave Allmann suggested that we put management on notice. At morning stand up talks, make sure management is letting carriers know they are entitled to all their breaks, including additional breaks from the heat as needed. Ask them, "are we supposed to take all our breaks, including additional heat breaks as needed?" Make them say it on the record in front of everyone.

If you need extra breaks in the heat, don't ask for permission, but make sure you notify management.



Branch Nine News
5831 Cedar Lake Road South
St. Louis Park, MN 55416



PRSR STD
US POSTAGE
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JUN 19

Juneteenth

JUN 23

General Membership Meeting
Every 4th Tuesday 7PM

Crystal VFW

JUN 28

Pride March w/AFL-CIO

Loring Park

JUL 4

Independence Day

JUL 14

National Convention
Delegate Meeting 6PM

Branch 9 Union Hall

JUL 14

Steward Board Meeting
Every Second Tuesday 7PM

Venue Change
Branch 9 Union Hall

JUL 28

General Membership Meeting
Every 4th Tuesday 7PM

Crystal VFW

AUG 3-7

NALC National Convention

Los Angeles
Convention Center

AUG 11

Steward Board Meeting
Every Second Tuesday 7PM

Crystal VFW

AUG 25

General Membership Meeting
Every 4th Tuesday 7PM

Crystal VFW

**Northside Retiree Breakfast
First Fridays @ 9:30**

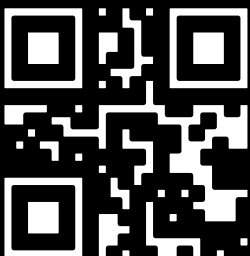
Elsie's
729 Marshall St. NE
Minneapolis

**N Suburban Retiree Breakfast
First Fridays @ 8:30**

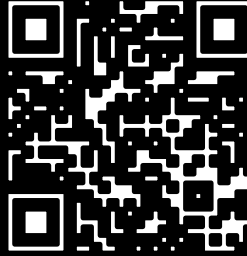
Denny's Restaurant
9020 Quadday Ave
Otsego

**Fridley Retiree Lunch
First Tuesdays @ 9:30AM**

Route 47 Pub and Grub
7820 University Ave
Fridley



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