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September 2021

Queen City Letter Carriers - NALC Branch 43 News & Views

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Ted Thompson
President

From the President's Desk

Every carrier in Cincinnati and Batavia knows the staffing shortages we're currently operating under. Of the issues branch members face, 90% is directly or indirectly related to staffing. I recently heard from NALC Executive Vice President Brian Renfroe on a Region 11 teleconference in which staffing was discussed. Nationally there is a subcommittee established that is currently digging deep into the root problems. Brian reported he is optimistic something will be done; he noted the solution may be different in different places. While I cannot or will not speak to reasons other areas of the country are suffering staffing shortages- I will speak on us locally. Through conversations with management, stewards and CCAs who resign, there are really four repeated reasons on why CCAs choose to resign. These four reasons are salary, hours worked or told to work, insufficient training or tools, and poor treatment from management. I want to give an update nationally and locally on these four issues.

When it comes to salary, the competition is fierce. No longer are the days when the Postal Service was considered a lucrative career with the salary and benefits offered. Under the August 28th pay schedule, CCAs start off at \$18.51 per hour. Through a quick job search and the 'now hiring signs' I see while traveling throughout the city, this is no longer adequate. There are too many local employers starting out equal or greater to this who are also providing sign on bonuses. While most of these employers do not offer the benefit package available to CCAs, or future career employment salaries and benefits, what

most applicants focus on is the dollar rate. Many view the Postal Service as a job compared to a career. Nationally, the NALC recognizes this needs addressed and is in communications with the Postal Service to potentially address this. However, this is a complex issue potentially tied to pending legislation.

Hours worked is undoubtedly the number one reason CCAs resign. Because some offices staffing is abysmal, management hammers the new employees as soon as they get to the office. Some get a full route and 3 hours assist the first day they get to the office. This then continues indefinitely to the point where they resign stating they don't want to work consistently long hours. I am currently in the attempt of adding Cincinnati to a national Memorandum of Understanding (M-01949) which places limits on the hours CCAs work during the onboarding and probationary periods. I have been working with and having discussions with Cincinnati acting Postmaster William "Bil" Rowe on this issue. Because the hours worked, many of these employees also complain or state they feel they were set up for failure, thus making them work longer than necessary, or the task given, which brings me to the next issue.

Many CCAs who resign feel they were not adequately trained or provided the tools and resources necessary for them to be successful. I firmly believe we have great carriers working at the academy and I believe the vast majority of our OJI's do as best they can when training these employees in the field under the circumstances they are given. These circumstances need to change to allow the OJI's ample opportunity to spend time with these employees, especially those who struggle. I expressed the issue of the OJI's being given extra work during training to the Postmaster. It is my understanding that this was discussed and put out to management and OJI's will not be given any extra assignments on training

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NEWS & VIEWS

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EDITOR'S (Taylor Whitt) NOTES

Branch 43 members are encouraged to send articles to the *News & Views*. Items of interest about your station, current events, etc. are welcome. The following guidelines apply:

- (1) We may edit your article for grammar, punctuation, spelling, etc.
- (2) If it should prove necessary to edit an article for space or coherence, every effort will be made to preserve the substance and intent of the article.
- (3) Unsigned articles will not be printed. Letters, criticism and suggestions for improving the *News & Views* are also welcome. If your letter is not intended for publication, please state so. Letters held to 150 words are less likely to be edited.
- (4) Articles must arrive at the Branch office by the 15th in order to make the next month's issue. Digital format is preferred. Send items to: taylorwhitt777@gmail.com

Printed in House

President cont.

days. If this happens, please notify the steward or branch office so that it may be corrected. While on the topic of OJI's, there is always a need for more. Some offices don't have any OJI's, requiring the new employee to be trained outside the office. While most the training issues I hear are not directly academy or OJI related, they do deal with what happens when they reach the office. For instance, new carrier "Julie" arrives to work. Upon arrival management notifies Julie she is to case and carry route X and take 3 hours of route Z. No one from management or any carriers in the office offer any guidance or help. Julie is lost and overburdened. Julie gets no help casing, no help on pulling the route down or setting it up, no help on best way to load the vehicle, no help on park points or relay breaks, no maps, and no help in what possible order the parcels should be delivered in. To make a bad situation worse, Julie is then told to deliver all the mail and be back by an unrealistic time. Julie feels lost and stressed and when she states so, it brings me to my next point- the way management treats them.

How dare we fail to follow managements instruction? Because that's how some of them view it. If management gives an employee a route plus extra and tells them what time to be back and off the clock with all mail delivered- how dare we not do that? So, when these new employees like Julie, who are stressed and overburdened and can't complete the unrealistic task given, they are then berated with threats of firing them if they don't complete the task. This is just one example of poor leadership and mismanagement. You all see it. You all hear it. We need to address it. There are a handful of managers or supervisors over Branch 43 offices whose treatment of people, of human beings, is unfathomable, yet real. This treatment of employees is a cultural issue in the Postal Service from L'Enfant Plaza all the way down to Branch

43 and greater Cincinnati. Its going to take true leadership and courage from upper-level management and branch officers, stewards, and members to tackle this issue the way it needs. We all know our job is to deliver the mail and provide good customer service, but we also all know the Postal Service can make rocket science out of this task using their metric systems of inches, feet, volumes, etc. into algorithms (DOIS/PET) to spit out how long our job should take us. However, they need to remember they are dealing with human beings when the issues they face by staffing shortages make the simple concept of mail delivery a tremendous challenge. This is an ongoing conversation between the acting Postmaster and myself currently.

There is some good news to report on these four issues, Cincinnati was selected as a test site for a new mentorship pilot program under Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) M-01961. The purpose of this pilot program is to provide newly hired city letter carriers the opportunity to have mentoring relationships with experienced city carriers through which feedback, coaching, and positive reinforcement can be shared. Mentors for this program will be voluntary. The NALC needs names of those interested in being a mentor for this program and I strongly encourage those that wish to help new employees and the Postal Service to volunteer. The NALC is especially looking for senior carriers in the offices. For many of us, when we started, there were veteran employees that helped teach us the craft and provide guidance and friendship. Throughout the years, we have lost a sense of that help and comradery. For myself, I can think of many senior employees that helped take me under their wing (Robin Harper, Billy Winters, Dave Norris- just to name a few of many). To gain this back, we are looking for mentors that will be willing to talk to CCAs about anything work related and help them navigate the path of new employ-

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Pat Dougherty
Vice President

From the Vice President

Article 10.5 Sick Leave

If you must call out for unscheduled sick leave using the 1-877-477-3273 number or if you use the USPS Lightblue website, make sure to write down the confirmation number for your records. Upon returning to work, the employee must submit a PS Form 3971 for the hours and dates of sick leave used. This is important to maintain for your records in case we must file a grievance on your behalf, because some rogue manager or supervisor puts you in for Leave Without Pay (LWOP) instead of your requested sick leave. Let's go over some contract language regarding the use of sick leave. Section 513.1 defines sick leave as leave which "insures employees against loss of pay if they are incapacitated for the performance of duties because of illness, injury, pregnancy and confinement, and medical (including dental or optical) examination or treatment." Letter carriers apply for sick leave, either in advance or after returning to work, by submitting a PS Form 3971. When an employee has an unexpected need for sick leave, he or she must notify the appropriate postal authorities as soon as possible of the illness or injury and the expected duration of the absence. Sick leave is paid at the employee's regular straight-time rate, and limited to maximums of 8 hours per day, 40 hours per week and 80 hours per pay period. ELM Section 513.65 provides, "If an employee becomes ill while on annual leave and the employee has a sick leave balance, the absence may be charged to sick leave." The conditions for authorization of sick leave are outlined in Section 513.32 of the ELM. When a request for sick leave is disapproved, the supervisor must check the block "Disapproved" and write the reason(s) on the PS Form 3971 and note any alternative type of leave granted (ELM Section 513.342). If sick leave is disapproved and the absence is nonetheless warranted, the supervisor may approve, at the employee's option, annual leave or LWOP (ELM Section 513.63). If the employee does not have sufficient sick leave to cover the absence, at the option of the employee any difference may be charged to annual leave and/or LWOP (ELM Section 513.61). Likewise, if the employee does not have any sick or annual leave for an approved absence, the approved absence may be

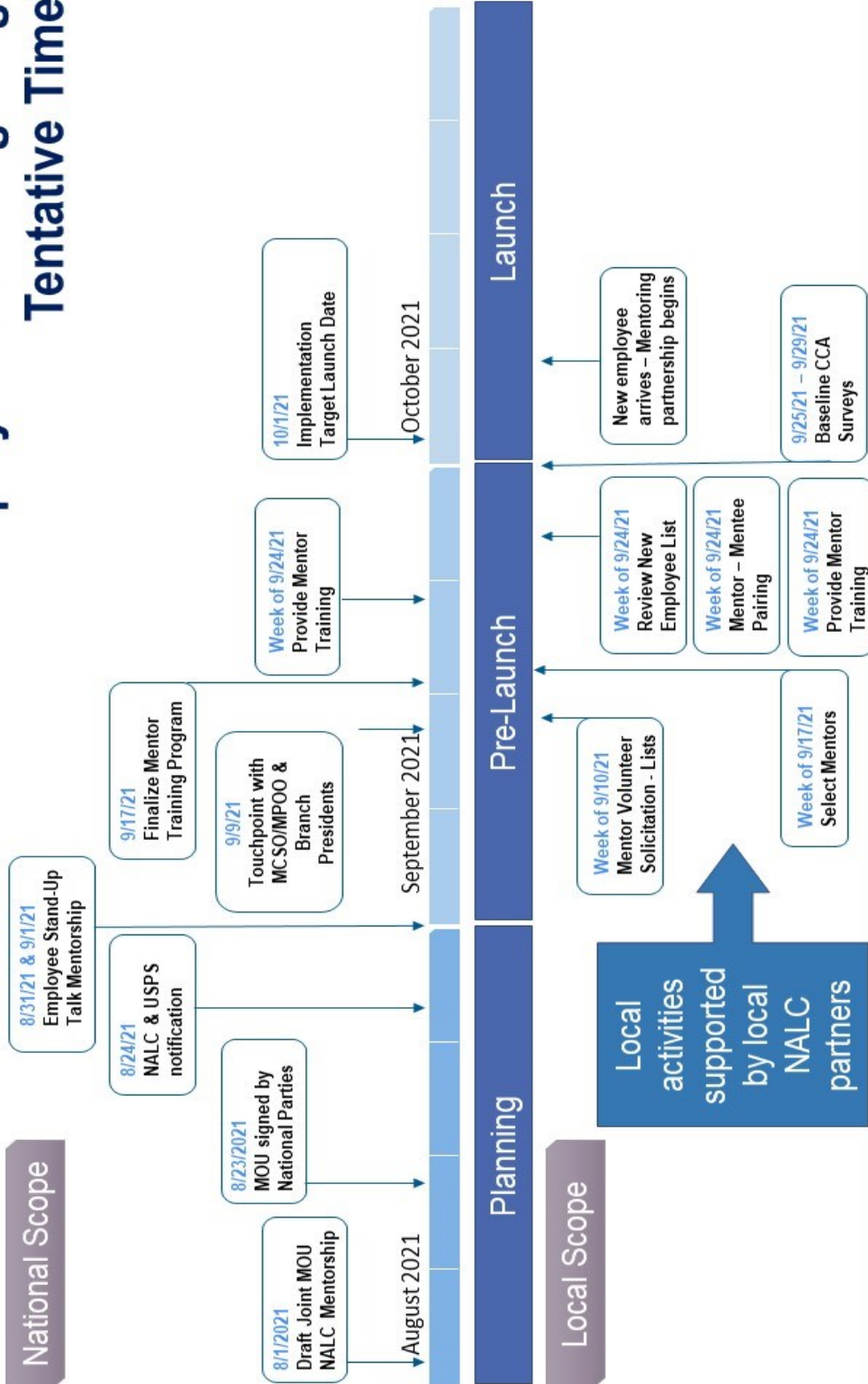
charged to LWOP (ELM Section 513.62).

Medical certification the ELM Section 513.361 and .362 establish three rules: 1) For absences of more than three days, an employee **must** submit "medical documentation or other acceptable evidence." 2) For absences of three days or less a supervisor **may** accept an employee's illness (unless the employee has been placed in restricted sick leave status, in which case verification is required for every absence related to illness regardless of the number of days involved.) 3) For absences of three days or less a supervisor may require an employee to submit documentation of the employee's illness "when the supervisor deems documentation desirable for the protection of the interests of the Postal Service." Numerous disputes have arisen over situations in which a supervisor has required an employee not in restricted sick leave status to provide medical documentation for an illness of three days or less. Generally, to challenge such a decision successfully the union should demonstrate that the supervisor acted arbitrarily, capriciously, or unreasonably in requiring the employee to obtain medical documentation. The union should be prepared to show that the grievant has a good overall sick leave record and no record of abuse. The branch has been very successful in filing grievances for members when we can show the grievant has not been placed on restricted sick leave and the grievant has a good overall sick leave balance proving the ability to maintain a regular work schedule. The remedy for these grievances is reimbursing the grievant their co-pay and mileage to and from the doctor's office. Consistent with the Rehabilitation Act, the parties agree that the ELM Sections 513.362 and 513.364 do not require the employee to provide a diagnosis (M-01629). Employees who are on extended periods of sick leave must submit at regular intervals, but not more frequently than once every 30 days, satisfactory evidence of their continued inability to perform their regular duties, unless "a responsible supervisor has knowledge of the employee's continuing incapacity for work" (ELM Section 513.363).

The National Agreement provides a right to use sick leave in certain situations, known as **sick leave for dependent care**. Under language contained in the national Memorandum of Understanding a letter carrier is entitled to use up to 80 hours of sick leave for dependent care per year. To give care or otherwise attend to a family member with an illness, injury, or other condition which, if an employee had such condition, would justify the use of sick leave by the employee. Family members shall include son or daughter, parent, and spouse as defined

Continued on page 6

New Employee Mentoring Program Tentative Timeline



President cont.

ment and learning the craft through the many difficulties they presently face. Mentors will take part in all employee evaluations (30, 60, 80-day reviews). If a CCA wants to resign, they are to discuss options with the mentor first. Mentors are to be given time on the clock for when a mentee calls them with an issue, whether that is delivery related and help finding an address or anything else work related. While there are no signed agreements, mentors are asked to commit to at least four months of mentoring for new employees. Mentors will be jointly selected by the NALC and USPS. The branch wants to take this memo seriously, so any issues whatsoever by a mentor and potential issues they encounter need to be elevated to my office to be handled with the Postmaster, who has indicated his word on partnership of this program. Service talks should be given in all offices on August 31st and September 1st for anyone interested in volunteering. Training is still being completed and will be given sometime later in September with the goal of having this implemented by October, just before we hit peak season and the chaos that can bring. I hope we get volunteers for this. This program success, along with addressing the other issues above will hopefully start getting us staffed better and address our atrocious attrition rate. Together, management, the union, and its members must address these issues for the future of this organization. Otherwise, if staffing is bad now, what would it be like if it were even worse? Please step up, volunteer, and take on this important task of helping mentor our future members. If anyone is interested and has questions, please feel free to reach out to your steward or my office to discuss. Meanwhile, I will give an update on the hiring.

The Postal Service has done job fairs all throughout the city, even doing drive through job fairs. Yard signs are up throughout the area. Every Door Direct Mail (EDDM) has been delivered across the city. QR codes have been designed allowing the opportunity for future applicants to scan the QR code with their mobile device and have it take them directly to the hiring page on the USPS website. Regular media and social media have been utilized consistently. The Postal Service has been in a constant state of hiring. Onboarding, and the time it takes, has been an issue. For many, it takes too long for the Postal Service to reach these employees after they apply. While there are many faults for this, some locally, they are working toward abating this waiting period. Background checks and drug testing have now been waived until after employed. I am cautiously optimis-

tic the waiting period can be reduced so that we lose less applicants than we currently do. With fierce competition for employees without competitive advantage, our inability to provide a flexible schedule many applicants prefer, we must get better at securing employment from the qualified applications we receive without unnecessary delay.

It has been reported to me that with the exception of one, all Branch 43 members entitled to retroactive pay have received it. With this backpay, the Postal Service broke it down into different periods which created some confusion. For those who review your paystubs, the miscellaneous portion is all standard, or normal, deductions (taxes, etc.). Along with the retroactive pay, for all career employees, the fourth Cost of Living Adjustment (COLA) under the 2109-2023 National Agreement will be \$1,934 annually for letter carriers in Table 1 and at Step O of Table 2. This COLA adjustment will be effective starting August 28th and reflected in our paychecks on September 17th.

For event updates, I have a few to address. Unfortunately, due to the continued impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Cincinnati AFL-CIO has cancelled the annual Labor Day celebration and picnic at Coney Island. Flyers went out last month for those to sign up. At the time of this writing, I do not know for certainty those rates will be honored. The Park itself will remain open to visitors. While I will not be at Coney Island this year to see many of you, I wish you and your families a happy Labor Day. This nation was built and is maintained through the labor you and others provide and I hope you celebrate that. Branch 43 has scheduled the fall Steward Seminar for October 7th. For stewards, those thinking of becoming a steward, or for those that want to learn more about your rights and the contract, this is the training to attend. These trainings are geared towards stewards but is open to all members. For those who will attend, please contact the branch office so we can get a head count for food purposes. Dinner will begin at 6:00 pm with training beginning at 7:00 pm. I know due to the hours worked this may be hard for some of you. Branch 43 will also be having officer and steward elections this fall. The Cincinnati AFL-CIO will have its vote on who will be the next Executive Secretary-Treasurer for the central labor council down at the branch office on Wednesday, September 1st. Hopefully I can report the outcome of that election at the September meeting. I hope to see you there!

Fraternally,
Ted Thompson



Dave Utz
Formal A Rep

STEWARD'S CORNER

First, I want to say **THANK YOU** for all the hours you have been working. Carriers are the face of the USPS. I would like to say it's going to get better, but it will be well into next year before a possible relief for carriers' long hours to subside. There are few CCAs applying for the job and staying. In my opinion, the USPS needs to go back to starting carriers as PTFs with benefits and higher starting pay. Keep up the great work.

We have a lot of carriers with little seniority in USPS. I am going to go over some of our rights as carriers per the contract. In the morning as the supervisor goes around and tells you "1 hour pivot". If you don't agree you can say I only have 1/2 hour if they insist don't argue, ask for PS Form 3996 complete form for OT. If your PS Form 3996 is disapproved you need to call or message on scanner by 2:30pm and let management know what time you will be back, always put the ball back in managements court.

The USPS discipline procedure: Letter of Warning (LOW), 7-day suspension, 14-day suspension, and removal. The carrier disciplined will be issued discipline by supervisor. Please sign and date the discipline. It is not an admission of guilt; it only acknowledges that you received the discipline and the date it was issued will be used as the incident date. The union has only 14 days to begin a grievance from the date you signed, at that time request to see a steward. If you do not have steward or they are off call the hall 542-6400. Check with your steward or hall again within 7 days to make sure the process has started.

What I am finding are carriers with LOW, 7-day suspension and 14-day suspension that have not been grieved. Discipline stays in your file for 2 years without settlement from NALC. All parties may agree discipline was warranted but never for 2 years. I personally have had discipline but through the grievance procedure its long gone. Carriers must grieve all discipline because you don't know what tomorrow will bring, maybe an accident or scanning discipline. This means if you have a 7-day suspension the next step is 14-day suspension, discipline in the USPS is progressive always going up to next step including removal.

A steward election will be held at all stations at the end of this year. Branch 43 needs younger carriers to step up and be a steward in your station. The more carriers we have at each station involved the better it

is for all carriers. I know we are all very busy but try to help the CCAs, we need all of them.

In Solidarity,
Dave UTZ

Vice President cont.



in ELM Section 515.2. Approval of sick leave for dependent care will be subject to normal procedures for leave approval. The carrier's right to sick leave for dependent care under the contract is separate and different from the right to leave under the Family and Medical Leave Act of 1993. Sick leave for dependent care is a benefit established by the National Agreement; the FMLA is a federal law. Still, there are certain overlaps. For instance, the definitions of son, daughter, spouse, and parent used for sick leave and for dependent care are the same as the FMLA definitions. So, an employee may take time off to care for the same persons under both sick leave for dependent care and the FMLA.

We filed a city-wide grievance in the Cincinnati Installation back in the spring of 2021 for local management unilaterally changing carriers unscheduled leave requests from sick or annual to either LWOP or AWOL. The settlement provided a cease and desist to the Cincinnati Installation unilaterally changing carriers unscheduled leave requests and it will provide a compensatory award for future violations. It also changed all effected carriers leave back to what they requested. If you have any questions on any of the sick leave rules and regulations, ask your local shop steward or call the union hall.

In Solidarity,
Pat Dougherty

Last Punch Bunch



Chuck Losey - Anderson



Keith Short - Blanchester

Motions made at the August Membership Meeting

To dispense with the roll call of Officers and reading of the previous months minutes. **Carried**

To pay Jim Metz for hours spent during October 17-18 virtual NALC Health Benefits Seminar. **Carried**

The building committee can sell assets of the branch, as needed. First to the membership, then to the public. **Carried**

Pay Burt Hughes \$500 for the refrigerator in the bar area. **Carried**

To pay the bills. **Carried**

To adjourn. **Carried**



Officer Election Notice

This will serve as official notification to all members of Branch 43 that nominations for election of officers will take place at 7:30 pm at the regular November branch membership meeting at the Letter Carriers' Hall located at 4100 Colerain Ave., Cincinnati, OH 45223. Any member desirous of becoming a candidate for office for Branch 43 must signify in writing not earlier than 45 days and no later than the adjournment of the November 2021 Branch meeting. Nominations will be taken for the following offices: President, Vice President, Financial Secretary, Recording Secretary, Treasurer, HBR/MBA, Sergeant-at-Arms, Compensation Officer, Director of Retirees, Director of Legislative and Political Affairs, five (5) Trustees, and five (5) AFL-CIO delegates. These elected offices will be for a three (3) year term beginning January 1, 2022. Balloting will be done by mail. Results of the election will be announced at the December 9th, 2021 meeting and installation of officers will take place at the January 13th, 2022 regular meeting.

Steward Election Notice

This shall serve as notice to all members that pursuant to Article 7 of the Branch by-laws, Branch 43 will hold Steward elections this year for the term beginning January 1, 2022 through December 31, 2024. Anyone desiring to run as Steward in their office must be a member in good standing who has not held or applied for a supervisor position for 2 years prior to the beginning of the term. Nomination notices shall be posted in each station on October 16th and remain posted through the close of business on October 26, 2021. If necessary, ballots will be distributed by November 1st and members shall vote in their respective stations from November 16th through November 30, 2021.

shop steward

noun: shop steward; plural noun: shop stewards

A person elected by workers to represent them in dealings with management.



STEWARDS SEMINAR

Thursday, October 7th

Dinner begins at 6:00 with training beginning at 7:00. Please call the office to reserve your spot.

In accordance with Article VII, Section 5 of the Branch 43 by-laws...*Steward Seminars will be conducted two times per year. Stewards will be informed in advance for scheduling. Stewards or their designee will be required to attend one (1) of the two (2) steward seminars given each year. Failure to attend a steward's seminar will result in the forfeiture of one half (50%) of the steward dues reimbursement paid annually.*



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Human Resources Share Service Center

1-877-477-3273 Option 5, then Select 6

TTY: 1-866-833-8777

MAILING ADDRESS:

HRSSC FMLA EASTERN

PO Box 970905

Greensboro NC 27497-0905

FAX: 651-456-6041

August Membership Meeting Raffle Winners

Split the Pot - Julia Smith

MDA - Marlon Casey, Keyasha Spikes, Randy Utz, Randy Seale & Melissa Tilton

Michael	Armbruster
Stephanie	Baker
Robert	Basler
Greg	Behrmann
Wm.	Bennett
Gary	Berling
Gregory	Brauer
James	Conner
John	Conway
Susan	Deweese
Ronald	Durrett
Suzanne	Egbers
Robert	Gavin
Keith	Gibbs
Rhonda	Guidugli
Thomas	Hamberg
Loretta	Henderson
Richard	Henry
Steven	Holt
Dennis	Hudson
Burton	Hughes
Mark	Jansen
Karen	Joy
Fred	Kirchgessner
Daniel	Kramer
Tony	Livengood
Terry	Lunn
Jerome	Mahlenkamp
Randolph	Maifield
Roy	Mangham
Michael	Metzger
James	Miller, Jr.
Donna	Nelson
Patricia	Nuss
Richard	Raybourne
Leroy	Roberts Jr.
Dennis	Selmeyer
Gregory	Stulz
Darel	Titus
William	Vandervort
Daniel	Walsh

September Retiree Birthdays



Chester F. Cox
Robert D. Shepherd



Sept. Gold Carders

Bernard	Becker
Jerry	Bedford
Michael	Christopfel
Thomas	Dwyer
Frank	McGraw
Herbert	Mitchell
Harold	Neff
Thomas	Paoello
Charles	Schweppe
William	Stoy
Mick	Vuotto
Edward	Welch

Happy

Birthday

August YOPC Attendees

Deborah Bryant
Liz Darby
Diana Enwright
Jerry Giesting
Art Holt
Burt Hughes
Dick Keller
John Macon
Gerry Mees
Dennis Uffer
Robert Wilkinson

Join fellow retirees next month for sharing old times, playing cards and lunch

Join fellow retirees for lunch

1:00 pm - 1st Monday of each month

October 4th

Longnecks Sports Grill
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Or Greg Stulz
(859) 380-9512



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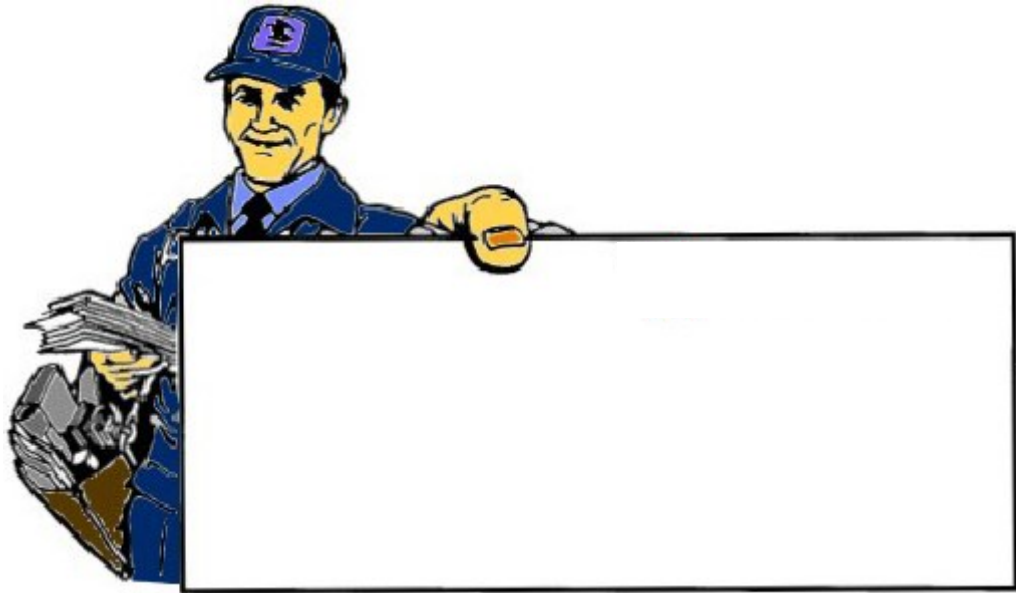
*Balance must be at least \$10,000 or greater to qualify. For loan balances below \$10,000 only the 90 day deferment will be offered. Member must qualify for the loan under normal underwriting guidelines. Minimum rate floor of this offer is 2.99% APR. Interest will accrue over the 90 day deferment period regardless of balance. Member must be able to provide verification of existing rate. Existing PFCU loans are excluded. This institution is not federally insured. **MEMBERS' ACCOUNTS ARE NOT INSURED OR GUARANTEED BY ANY GOVERNMENT OR GOVERNMENT-SPONSORED AGENCY**

Queen City Letter Carriers

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Upcoming Events

- Labor Day Holiday** - Monday, Sept. 6th
- Officers Meeting** - Sept. 9th, 6:00 PM
- Branch Meeting** - Sept. 9th, 7:30 PM
- October YOPC** - Wednesday, Oct. 6th
- Steward Seminar** - Thursday, Oct. 7th

