



Press On

*St. Louis Gateway District Area Local
American Postal Workers Union AFL-CIO*

Volume 99 Issue 6



November/December 2021



FROM YOUR LOCAL EXECUTIVE BOARD

President's Report

By Becky Livingston

Essential Meaning of Trust

: belief that someone or something is reliable, good, honest, effective dependable, accountable, etc. ...

assured reliance on the character, ability, strength, or truth of someone or something

Solidarity

: a feeling of unity between people who have the same interests and goals

Over the past few weeks, I have reflected on all of the challenges that the United States Postal Service and the American Postal Workers have faced over the last year. We are still in the middle of a pandemic and the workroom struggles haven't changed. We are all waiting for the final decision from the USPS and the APWU regarding the vaccination mandates and how it will apply to the employees. There are a lot of uncertainties facing us right now, but I believe we are ready to take on those challenges and be successful. Things are getting better and together we can accomplish great things. The most important thing to remember is, "United we stand, divided we fall." We have to remember that: "Labor never quits. We never give up the fight – no matter how tough the odds, no matter how long it takes." **George Meany**

We have been organizing Zoom craft meetings as a way of reaching out to the members who would like to voice their concerns and ask questions that are on everyone's mind. Please plan on attending your next craft meeting; your voice matters. I believe that you would find the meetings to be everything from informative to entertaining and everything in between. While we won't always agree on how to approach a problem and we don't always get immediate results, one thing I can guarantee you is it is not because the officers and stewards aren't doing everything they can to address your concerns. The last craft meeting was attended by eight out of a possible 137 employees. While I appreciated everyone who did participate, I was disappointed that more members were not available to attend or just didn't want to. Every member has a right to voice their concerns, every day if necessary, to get their issues addressed. However, **their** concerns, not everyone else's is what would be more effective. Our Zoom meetings can accommodate 1,000 members. When I hear, from one or two members, that no one is attending the craft meetings because the members don't **trust** the stewards and they (the members) would rather represent themselves, it causes great concern. I believe that

the officers and stewards who represent the St. Louis Gateway District Area Local members are

the very definition of the word. The union is here to address your concerns involving disputes, differences, disagreements or complaints between the parties related to wages, hours, and conditions of employment. What the union does not do is tell you what you want to hear. To the best of our ability, we defend our members within the confines of the contract and our answers should be based on facts. Our members expect the stewards to know all of the answers all of the time. I can assure you there is no way we can know all things, as we all learn something new every day. But what I do expect from the officers and stewards is that when we don't know the answer, we make calls and do research until we have the right answer and get back to you. It may take a day or two, but if the stewards don't get back to you in a timely manner, please let me know. Please know that this is in regards to contractual questions, things we have control of. Addressing pay issues and getting them resolved is another issue altogether. While we can send emails, make calls and file grievances, management is the only one that can take care of getting you paid and getting you paid correctly. Please make sure that you keep copies of all 1260s and continue to check your pay sheets every pay period as we are still getting reports that there are improper adjustments being made. Please read the 3971s carefully and make sure that they have put you in the system for the leave you requested. If there is a question, please immediately request a steward. Don't sign the 3971 unless it is correct. The 3971 is what is used to support management's position if you would receive any attendance related discipline. Remembering the reason for the absence is much easier if you are signing right when you return from the absence than months later when management issues discipline. If management approaches you with multiple 3971s covering absences for months at a time and wants you to sign them,



please read them carefully and sign and date them with that specific date, not the date of the absence. Management is required to give you the 3971 upon your return to work. They are also required to give you official attendance reviews in order to address your attendance and suggest utilizing the Employee Assistance Program or securing Family Medical Leave to protect your absences during the discussions.

Please ask the union questions that relate to wages, hours, and working conditions. You can always ask management, that is your right, but please follow up by asking the union. The union will make sure that you get the cor-

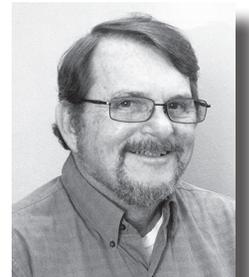
rect answer. Remember, our job is to help you to be successful and have a long career with the Postal Service. Your responsibilities are to maintain a regular work schedule and follow your last instruction unless it is going to (physically) hurt you or someone else. These are the two most difficult disciplines to defend and many jobs have been lost for something that only you have control of. Please help us help you. The union isn't successful without all of our members standing together in solidarity. We are in this together!

I hope everyone has a very **happy holiday season and an even happier New Year!** Please stay safe and I hope to see you all very soon!



Executive Vice President

By Gene Hollenbeck



First, I would like to thank all those who have served and those family members who are serving now. Our veterans and those who are serving now make this country great. All gave some ... some gave all. To those who gave all and their families, thank you for your sacrifice.

We are now in the holiday season. Veteran's Day, Thanksgiving and then Christmas and the New Year. I hope that everyone has a wonderful holiday season.

Vacation selections should have begun by the time the Press On reaches your doorstep. Your stewards will be coming to you for your selection. Please have your selections ready when it comes to your turn. As in the past there will be three rounds of selections. These should be completed by the middle of January 2022. During the first and second round you can select up to 15 continuous days. This will depend on your leave category. On the third round you can exhaust your yearly entitlement.

Remember that we are now in the peak season. There will be more overtime than most of you will want. There will be times that everything seems to go wrong. Just remember, we are all human and this won't last forever. Don't take your frustrations out on your co-workers or your supervisors. They are going through the same things. Come to work, be on time and do your best to ensure that we get the mail to our customers. They are why we are here.

The Penalty Overtime Exclusion period this year is December 4 to December 31, 2020.

Once again, thank you to all of our veterans and to your family members who are serving now.

Happy Thanksgiving, merry Christmas and a very happy New Year.

We are all in this together. Union strong all day long!



Kessler's Comments

Bob Kessler, Clerk Craft NBA, St. Louis Region

I'm writing this article to address recent developments which have taken place in the local's ongoing long-term struggle with an arrogant employer and labor representatives who do not believe they have to adhere to the contract, national settlements, step 3 settlements, or arbitration decisions that have ordered them to cease and desist violations.

I want to thank the local officers and stewards for their continuous outstanding work in providing the necessary arguments, documents, and information to enable us to succeed at this level in the grievance procedure. Without the president's and stewards' continuous and ongoing input, these things could not have happened.

PRE-ARBITRATION SETTLEMENT — TACS DUTIES/LEAD CLERKS

On October 22, we entered an agreement that requires the employer to pay a monetary remedy for violating the national TACS settlement that returned this work to our bargaining unit lead clerks. In addition, they have agreed to completely turn over all of these duties to the lead clerks by November 27. At the time of drafting this article we know they will not be able to accomplish this, and further grievances will need to be filed. In the meantime, I am asking the **lead clerks** who will be reading this to continue to have patience with us as it will take some time to arrange payment, **but it is coming!** There will be two payments, both made by an April 22 deadline.

ONGOING NON-COMPLIANCE WITH ARBITRATION AWARD — DBCS STAFFING

For those DBCS clerks who have been unreasonably worked to "death" we have escalated additional payments from 100% to 150% and now 200%. We recently discovered that management has not been paying for the grievances filed and settled, so they have been ordered to do so and, hopefully, by the time you read this you will have begun to see those payments on your paycheck. **But the ultimate goal is to stop the violations altogether as payment (no matter how much) is no longer an acceptable settlement in exchange for your health! I currently have several cases at Step 3 waiting for discussion.** When they are discussed, I will refuse to accept anything other than compliance with the cease and desist. So please have patience a little longer as

I have been working closely with steward Brian Roberts who has fashioned a perfect case that makes it impossible for them to settle at Step 3 — the intent being that we schedule this issue for arbitration on the next available date to force compliance.

PUNITIVE DISCIPLINE FOR PSE ATTENDANCE

The local has waged a four-year battle to eliminate the punitive discipline policy established for PSEs in retaliation to attendance matters. There has been a strategy that we have taken to force them to use corrective rather than punitive discipline where PSEs are involved. The latest arbitration award we recently received sustained our grievance, vacated the removal for not following the Article 16 requirement for progressive discipline and made the grievant whole. After having received this fifth straight successful award from five different arbitrators, we are hopeful they will abandon this "automatic" skipping of a step in the Article 16 requirements to issue corrective, rather than punitive discipline. If not, we will arbitrate them into submission on this issue!

ELIMINATION OF THE BACKLOG OF PENDING ARBITRATION CASES

And last, but not least, is the fact that negotiations to settle the TACS issue for St. Louis and the associate offices under the jurisdiction of the Gateway Area Local, provided an opportunity to discuss and settle all pending cases in the entire state of Missouri. To the majority who read this it will have little meaning. But for all officers and stewards it is a monumental moment. Article 15 contains provisions that are intended to move grievances through the grievance/arbitration process in a timely manner. That has never happened. Cases are backlogged by the hundreds and thousands around the country. It usually results in cases not being heard for years. We now, for the first time, will be able to immediately schedule all unresolved cases that we intend to pursue without delay. First up will probably be DBCS staffing! I give full credit to your president, as without Becky's total involvement, cooperation, and instant knowledge of every case pending, enabling her to give me updates, this simply could not have been achieved.

I will finish by wishing everyone happy holidays with wishes for a better new year!



Editor's

By Shelia Patton-Harris

Corner



Well, after 34 years, I am calling it a career. Due to various health problems, I have decided to retire. I have worked with some really great people like Claudella, Becky, Gene, and all the other stewards. I will miss a lot of you and I wish you all well. I've had my time and now the time is past, so off I go to start another phase of my life. Thank you to all who listened to my many stories about being a fireman and a paramedic. I will continue to be the editor for as long as the membership chooses to elect me. Many of you have enriched my life and for that I am grateful.

I know you have heard this a thousand times, but it bears repeating, **come to work**. Watch you attendance. Check those 3971s before you sign them. You can't beat the system, but you can make it work to your advantage. If you have a chronic condition, get FMLA. This will help protect you from discipline for your attendance. Listen to your stewards. They are there to help you. Enjoy your holidays, stay safe, and be careful.



FROM HIRED TO RETIRED.

Federal retirement planning is unique, as there are a plethora of factors to consider. FEFA's reputation as the premier federal retirement planning service for employees across the country is built on our comprehensive, purpose-driven approach to the individual needs of each federal worker. We have grown from word-of-mouth referrals, now working as a retirement resource for more than 150 union locals and branches. Our informative, non-solicitation services are second to none. We are committed to providing all federal employees with complimentary assistance, regardless of their career or financial position, in exchange for good word of mouth which helps our continued growth of the FEFA brand.

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Comprehensive FERS Retirement Classes

Sunday, January 16

10 a.m. - 11:30 a.m.
&
3 p.m. - 4:30 p.m.

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Bring Pay stub, TSP, SSA Info
Spousal Attendance Encouraged
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(5+ Days Prior)



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- Interim period
- Annual & Sick Leave
- 401(k) Options
- Social Security

RETIREMENT TIP:

If you haven't heard of the Basic Employee Death Benefit, or "BEDB," don't feel bad. One of the lesser known federal benefit programs, the BEDB provides the surviving spouse of a federal employee with a death benefit paid by the government. The name itself can lead to some confusion with the Basic Life Insurance program, but the BEDB is separate from the optional Federal Employee Group Life Insurance (FEGLI). If you, or someone you work with, should pass away while currently employed, the government will provide your spouse with a payment totalling half of your final base salary plus an additional ~\$35,000 (approximately). To qualify for this free benefit you must be currently employed through FERS, have 10 or more years of civilian service and have been married to the now surviving spouse for at least nine months.

When the BEDB benefits are paid out, they can be taken as 36 monthly installments or in lump sum. Payment(s) are considered taxable income as they're received, but all or a portion of the BEDB can be transferred to a traditional IRA to avoid immediate income tax exposure.

Associate Office Director's Report

By Melani Brown



GREETINGS MEMBERS

Let's talk about discipline. I know I have written about this before, but as there seems there is an increase in the amount of discipline being issued, I feel we need to address this issue again. I want you, as the members, to understand how one piece of discipline can potentially exist in your file for a very long time.

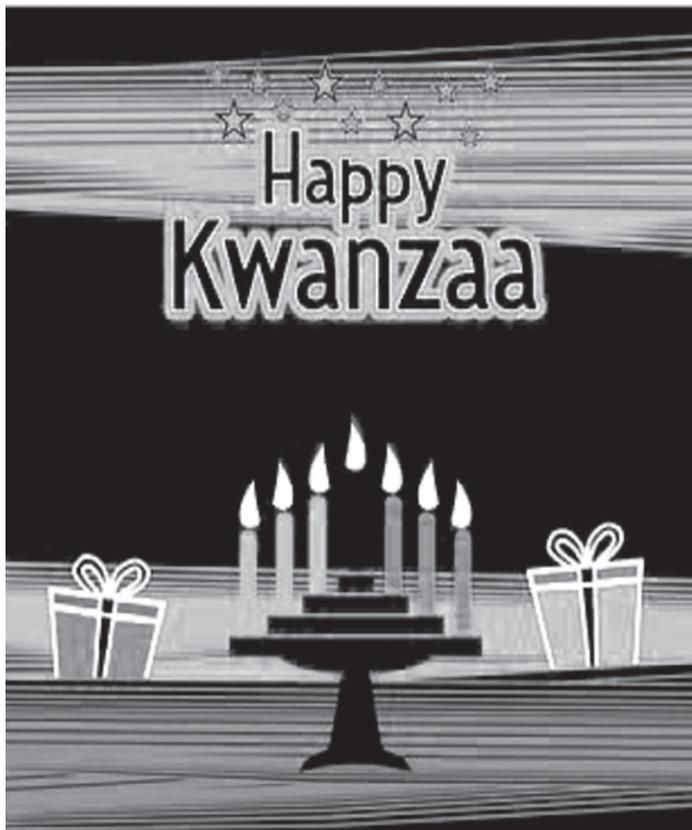
Let's start with a *letter of warning* (LOW). Perhaps you received a *letter of warning* for failure to maintain a regular work schedule. Without the union becoming involved, this LOW would stay in your file for two years. If the union becomes involved in your LOW grievance and the steward gets your LOW of warning reduced to three months in your file — meaning you can't have any unexcused absence for three months — if you continue to miss work, then you may receive a PDI, and maybe you will receive a seven-day suspension for *failure to maintain*. This LOW then remains in your file for two years from the date that the seven-day suspension was issued.

Now, let's say the steward gets the seven day reduced

to six months provided you receive no further discipline for six months. Now you get another piece of discipline, a fourteen day suspension, within that six-month period making the original piece of discipline (LOW) to remain in your file for two years along with the seven day suspension as well as the fourteen day suspension.

Since you have not worked your way out of your previous discipline, the next form of discipline you would receive would be a *letter of removal*. This becomes a vicious cycle. When I, as a shop steward, discuss your grievances and get them reduced to a favorable decision, you should take that opportunity and correct your bad behavior. If you receive a *letter of removal*, you just may find yourself on the outside of the USPS, looking in, wishing you would have corrected your attendance.

Everyone should take their job seriously, as management is serious about issuing discipline and removing people from the USPS.



MVS (Motor Vehicle Service)

By Bobby Riehl

Weingarten Rights

Members need to remember if in doubt with regards to management on discipline, express your rights! Management will try to continue the process of discipline but keep expressing your right to have representation, to have a steward present. If you say this, they have to cease and desist with their meeting and get you a steward in a timely fashion. If given or receive discipline by mail, immediately get with a steward. You only have a window of 14 days to grieve the discipline. I can't express it enough that if you sit on it, it could be the difference of having it on your record for two years, compared to having a steward bargaining in good faith and possibly having it dropped to a job discussion or a

little time on your record. There are time limits on the discipline so the sooner you communicated with a steward the better.

Scanning

We are required to scan departure of facilities and arrivals folks.

Vehicles

When you are doing your pre-trips, **before you start your run** make sure that you are writing the vehicle up for the discrepancies that you find. Any damage, take a picture and show your supervisor on duty, and follow up with that supervisor.

Accidents

We have had 33 accidents since the beginning of the year. We need to be aware of our surroundings. The was and is an acronym that was put

into my head when I had gone to MTC, truck driving school — GOAL (Get Out and Look.)

Safety

If you see a safety concern, don't be scared to write it up! If you see any equipment operators working improperly, write it up and have a supervisor sign it and they have to give you a copy and send the other copy to safety coordination.

Remember, the city of St. Louis has implemented and mandated the wearing of a mask. The mask must be worn properly covering your mouth and nose. If you feel threatened by someone who isn't wearing their mask properly, report it. The proper paperwork is a form 1767. You can find them all over the plant, by the elevators and by the dispatch office.

COME TO OUR SIDE OF THE FENCE

We started in 1928 as the credit union for postal workers. Today, we've opened our doors to everyone in our surrounding communities, but our roots remain. We can save you money on:

- Checking accounts with online banking, mobile banking, mobile deposit and more¹
- Auto loans with low rates and no payments for 90 days² (even on refinances!)
- Home equity loans with low rates and no closing costs³
- Mortgage loans with competitive rates
- Savings, CDs, money markets and IRAs
- Club accounts for youth, teens and seniors
- And more!

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Where the grass is greener

¹Message and data rates may apply from your wireless carrier. ²Interest will continue to accrue during deferral period. ³If loan is paid off and closed within 24 months from opening of loan, member must reimburse the credit union for fees paid.

Membership eligibility required on all offers. Restrictions apply on all offers. See Neighbors Credit Union for complete details on all offers.

New Steward Training Classes

Interested in attending new steward training? Please call the Union Hall or contact a steward to get signed up. Plan on joining us via Zoom training classes starting on January 4, 2022. Classes will be every Tuesday and Thursday at 9 a.m. or 6 p.m. thru February 3, 2022.

Please Note: Participation in new steward training does not guarantee that you will be appointed a steward. What is guaranteed is training that will help you be successful in knowing your rights as a member of the St. Louis Gateway District Area Local. Education is the best tool we have in protecting our jobs! Help us help you!

We are all in this together!

How to Use a Home Blood Pressure Monitor

If you have high blood pressure (also called hypertension), home monitoring allows you and your doctor to track your numbers and determine how well your medications are working. Self-monitoring may also motivate you to improve your diet, lose weight, and get more physical activity. While many pharmacies have public blood pressure machines, their accuracy varies. For more reliable results, use a digital home blood pressure monitor.

Choose a blood pressure monitor that is right for you

Home blood pressure monitors feature an inflatable cuff that fits around your upper arm and a gauge for readouts. A properly fitting cuff is essential for accurate measurements. Before buying a monitor, ask your doctor what size cuff you need. To check the accuracy of your monitor, bring it to your doctor's office once a year and compare your monitor's readings with those taken during your appointment. (However, remember that your blood pressure may be about five points lower at home than it is at your doctor's office). Visit validateBP.org to find a list of home blood pressure monitors that the American Medical Association has validated for accuracy.

How to use a home blood pressure monitor

Measure your blood pressure twice a day, first in the morning before you eat, take any medications, or exercise, and again in the evening. Take two or three readings (about three minutes apart) to make sure your results are accurate.

Before measuring your blood pressure:

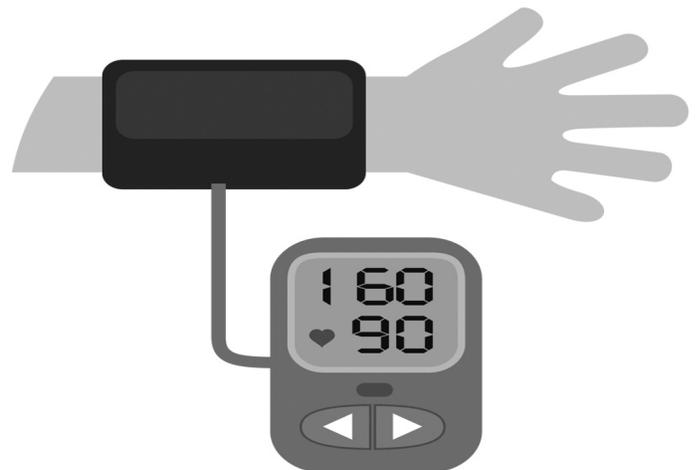
- Avoid caffeine, tobacco, and alcohol for 30 minutes.
- Empty your bladder.
- Sit for five minutes in a comfortable chair with your legs and ankles uncrossed.

To measure blood pressure at home:

- Always use the same arm.
- Sit in an upright position with your back supported, feet flat on the floor, and your arm at heart level.
- Rest your arm on a table to raise it to the level of your heart. (If needed, place a pillow under your arm.)
- Secure the cuff on bare skin, not over your clothes. The bottom of the cuff should sit directly above the bend of your elbow.

Home blood pressure monitoring is useful, but it's not a substitute for regular doctor visits. Never stop or change your medications without talking to your doctor first.

Source: Mayo Clinic



Welcome to ECOMP

ECOMP is a web based application accessible via the Department of Labor's public internet site. Through this portal, federal workers and their employers may;

*Electronically file workers compensation forms:

* Track the exact status of any form or document submitted via ECOMP

* Electronically upload and submit documents to existing DFEC case files

The Employees' Compensation Operations & Management Portal (ECOMP) allows federal employees to file claims for benefits under the Federal Employees' Compensation Act (FECA) online. You will begin by registering with the ECOMP website: <https://www.ecomp.dol.gov>.

1. Click the registration link to register for an account.
2. Enter your personal information including your name, email address, you supervisor's email address, and choose your agency information.
3. Once you have completed the registration information, click the Create Account button.
4. Go to your email and complete your registration by clicking the provided line to confirm your email. Providing accurate information during registration is very important. If you need help with the ECOMP interface visit <https://www.ecomp.dol.gov/>.

File a CA-1 or CA-2

After you have filled out all required fields in your CA-1 or CA-2 and electronically submitted it to your supervisor, you will be notified of you form's progress in ECOMP every step of the way via email. The final email you receive will provide you with your OWCP case number.

You can also monitor your ECOMP forms via your claimant home page. Simply log in to your ECOMP account.

Additional help and training materials for filing claims in ECOMP can be found in the *Help* section of the ECOMP home page:

User
Guides
Injured Worker
Supervisor Form Review
Agency Reviewer
Disability Management Interface
OSHA Record Keeper
Agency Maintenance Help
Uploading Document to FECA Case Files
Filing a Form CA-7 in ECOMP

ECOMP also allows CA-7 forms may be filed for cases created in ECOMP and for cases created outside ECOMP also allows federal employee users to file CA-7 wage loss compensation claims via the portal and for cases created outside ECOMP.

For cases created in ECOMP, you log in to your ECOMP account and find the CA-1 or CA-2 form for which you want to file a CA-7. Note, you can only file a CA-7 if the form has been created as a case by OWCP.

Click the CA-7 link within the form

For cases created outside of ECOMP, click the button at the top right hand side of the screen to locate an existing case and find your CA-7 form's listing to begin the process.

File CA-7 for cases not listed

After you have filled out all required fields in your CA-7 and electronically submitted it to your injury compensation and/or HRM office, you will be notified of your form progress every step of the way via email.

Additional help and training material for filing CA-7 claim in ECOMP can be found at <https://www.ecomp.dol.gov/>.





Barnes, Candance
 Bell, Zelena
 Boyd, Latasha
 Brooks, Shawn
 Brown, Teshar
 Bryant, Dawn
 Bulard, India
 Burns, Lilyanna
 Coleman, Tiffany
 Davis, Mariah
 Davis, Quinshaeshio
 Frazier, James
 Gaines, DeAngelo
 Galvin, Aigner
 Gaston, D'Asia
 Gleghorn, Tierra
 Graves, Latteshia
 Green, Devontay
 Harper, Keyana
 Harris, Abegail
 Harris, Brandy
 Harris, Breanna
 Hollingwor, Soleil
 Holmes, Johnny
 Holmes, William
 Hossen, Md
 Houston, Carlicia
 Humphrey, Sharay
 Hunter, Infinity
 Jackson, Dominick
 Johnson, Paris
 Johnson, Victoria

Jones, Jerrica
 Keen, Jamesina
 Lebcowitz, Nicholas
 McFadden, Deja
 Mcruder, Shavonne
 Meriwether, Dominic
 Moore, Andreanna
 Moses, Bryanna
 Mtseka, Servasio
 Newbern, Jerricka
 Nichols, Calvert
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 Perry, Alia
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 Russell, Brittany
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 Suggs, Derrisha
 Thomas, Brenia
 Thorpe, Marquette
 Tobias, Melvin
 Trotter, Shakila
 Williams, Aneya
 Williams, Brittney
 Williams, Jasimen
 Williams, Stacy
 Williams, Crytal



We Wish to Extend
 Our Condolences to
 the Friends and
 Family of:

Karl James Reid Sr.

Father of Paul Reid, MVS

Please update this information and share with your family members in case of postal employee death:

HRSCC 1-877-477-3273

Option 5

Option 2

The agent will ask for the employee's EIN or SSN.

The benefits department and/or the bereavement specialist will contact the family member.

Please save for future reference

Manage diabetes with stay at home exercises

Regular exercise is essential for people with diabetes. Staying active can help you keep your blood glucose levels in check, lose weight, reduce your risk of heart disease, and improve your self-esteem.

Here are some exercises you can do at home—no gym required:

1. Walking — When you diabetes, walking is a great way because you can do it almost anywhere—can even walk in place while you If it has been awhile since you've walk, start with a short stroll through neighborhood and gradually increase time and distance each week.
2. Calisthenics — These rely on your own body weight to strengthen your muscles, and they minimal equipment. Calisthenics help you build endurance and flexibility.
 - Lunges
 - Planks
 - Pull-ups
 - Push-ups
 - Squats
3. Cardio — At-home cardio can help you burn calories and tone your muscles.



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Press On

Official publication of the St. Louis Gateway District Area Local of the American Postal Workers Union, AFL-CIO published bimonthly. Opinions expressed do not necessarily reflect the views of the editor of the local. All articles submitted for publication are subject to editing.

Shelia Patton-Harris ... Editor
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 MVS ... 314-436-5027

GATEWAY LOCAL CALENDAR

January 1	(Sat)	New Years Day Holiday	
January 5	(Wed)	Executive Board Meeting	(2 p.m.)
January 9	(Sat)	General Membership Meeting	(3 p.m.)
January 10	(Mon)	Steward Training	(9 a.m. & 6 p.m.)
January 17	(Mon)	Dr. M.L. King Birthday Holiday	
February 9	(Wed)	Executive Board Meeting	(2 p.m.)
February 12	(Sat)	General Membership Meeting	(9:30 p.m.)
February 14	(Mon)	Steward Training	(9 a.m. & 6 p.m.)
February 21	(Mon)	Presidents Day Holiday	
March 9	(Wed)	Executive Board Meeting	(2 p.m.)
March 13	(Sun)	General Membership Meeting	(3 p.m.)
March 14	(Mon)	Steward Training	(9 a.m. & 6 p.m.)

There will be no General Membership Meetings in the months of July and August. The Union Hall will be closed on holidays.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, Zoom meetings will replace in person meetings and training until further notice. A close caption interpreter is available for all General Membership meetings.

More information is available on the website, stlouisapwu.org



Moving?
*Send us your new address
 so we can stay in touch.*

Help Nancy, our office secretary, by sending us your address changes. Your union spends many work hours and pays significant postage fees to obtain your correct address. We cannot get your union paper to you on time without your correct address. Thank you.