



News 56



PEAK SEASON 2021



Branch President

Darrell Helsley

Hello Brothers and Sisters,

It has been a while since the last Newsletter and many things have happened, so let's dig in and get everyone up to date on branch activities.

August 29th marked the annual J Hunter MDA Golf tournament held at Boulder Creek Golf Course in Belding, MI. We had the normal number of teams and had to stop registration early due to demand. It was a formidable day for golf (a little chilly and windy in the am). We collected a Grand Total of \$16,472.00 and after paying the course for golf and food, we sent over \$9,000 to MDA. Tee sponsorship was down this year, but it was to be expected with the COVID-19 still effecting local businesses. The following major raffle prizes were won by the following: Hotel / Day Spa Package – Nichole George (Wyoming carrier), 36" Blackstone Tabletop Grill – Kyle Inosencio (Region 6 RAA), Nintendo Switch – Aaron Adams (Major Family Sponsor every year). I know many of you may be tired of hearing it, but I have got to say it again for those in the back – We had a 1st for our golf outing, and it was a Hole-in-One hit by yours truly, ME! What an awesome feeling to accomplish such a rare feat but to do it with friends as your witnesses makes it extra special. There's too many to list individually but a special Thank You to each and every volunteer that helps to put this amazing event on each and every year.

Sept 12th marked the annual Retiree Dinner. This year we tried something new and held a luncheon instead. This allowed the retirees an opportunity to attend and not worry about driving home in the dark. 2 years had passed since our last get together because of COVID-19 so we had numerous awards to pass out. Almost every retiree in attendance received some type of a lapel pin signifying NALC membership and we also had a few 50-year GOLD card members and even a 65-year membership. National was not able to send an Executive Officer but our National Business Agent Troy Clark (Dec 2021 Retiree) attended along with one of his assistants Kyle Inosencio. Note: David Mudd has been appointed as the new Region 6 NBA – Congrats David!

November 20th marked the annual Holiday Party held at the Knights of Columbus in Wyoming. We held it early this year because of complaints from exhausted carriers working so many hours during Peak that they just could not attend. The food was great, open bar and a DJ to make for a fun and enjoyable evening of camaraderie with active and retired carriers alike. Approximately one week after the party, a few carriers tested positive for COVID-19. No one knows if the positive results came from the party or not, but management blamed the Union and particularly me for holding the gathering. Of course, many attended to include myself that did not test positive. Ironically, a week after the party was also a Holiday called Thanksgiving where I am positive that no one could have possibly contracted the virus from gathering with friends and family. Management felt someone needed to be blamed for it so it might as well be the Union. It worked out that almost every carrier that tested positive was quarantined and ultimately cleared to return right on time for the exclusionary period and peak season. Hmmm, always look on the bright side.

2021 also marked the time for nominations and elections for Branch Officers and delegates to National and State. Nominations were held at the Nov 4th general meeting and every position was by acclamation except the Health Benefits Representative and the 3 Trustee positions. That

many positions filled by acclamation is simply astounding and shows that the membership trusts how the board is running the branch and/or no one wants to step up and try to make changes. Jan 6th, 2022, will mark the start of my 4th year serving as your President. It also will mark the last term for me, as I plan to retire the beginning of 2024 from the Post Office. Although the salary as your President makes it soooo tempting to run again as your President (lol). The results from the election showed Mike Schregardus winning the Health Benefits Representative position, the 3 Trustee positions went to Jimmy Burns, Joe Noel and Tonya Casey. Congratulations to all those elected and a Thank you to Lou Wagner for serving as a Trustee and Executive Board Member the past 2 years. All the National and State delegates were filled by acclamation. I must remind everyone that the branch needs a valid current mailing address on file to send all correspondence which includes ballots. Changing your address with the Post Office or National does not change it with the Branch. We received over 30 ballots back for various reasons with "UTF" and no new address. This not only means a possible vote for someone but it's also wasted membership monies for printing, envelopes, labels and the actual postage to send, plus return pre-paid postage.

Higher management allowed Grand Rapids to hire more CCAs than usual and we went from being down in the low 20s to just over 60 CCAs and they were mostly trained and ready prior to peak season. This did allow for an easier peak season than previously. Did it cure all the problems with long hours? No....but it did allow for less forcing of mandatory overtime compared to previous years. It is amazing how preparing for something that happens every single year is so hard to comprehend. Management did try a new program that they wanted at least 15% of all parcels delivered prior to 9 am. This meant that WA and OTDL had to start anywhere from 530 to 6 am to do parcel runs. This contributed to many of the long days during peak. Some offices did force non-listers to work their NSD, but it was not as many times this year.

I was informed in late December that HR had decided to move Grand Rapids back to automated bidding starting in January 2022. This is in direct conflict with a signed agreement that Branch 56 has with local management. I will be filing a citywide grievance for non-compliance of this signed agreement. There are many reasons why we needed to move to manual bidding 3 years ago in the 1st place and it has benefitted the members in doing so. We as a branch can survive going back to automated bidding but that is not the point. Management is simply choosing to ignore a signed agreement. Signed agreements are contracts and are binding unless both sides agree to change them. This is not the case at hand, management is simply playing the bully. I opened our LMOU earlier this year to have language added on a different subject that management argued against. We could not agree and I empassed our position and sent it forward to arbitration. The branch won the argument and through pre-arbitration the wording was included in the 2019-2023 GR LMOU. Management could have challenged the wording on manual bidding and raised the issue at that time but chose not to. Sounds like a case of failure to bargain in good faith to me. Onward we go!

2021 ended with a contractual raise for all carriers that has now pushed a top level O carrier to just over \$70,000. Thank you, NALC for agreeing to a contract that helps to keep all carriers stable and moving in the right direction.



Looking forward to what 2022 has to offer.
Until next time,
Darrell Helsley 616-328-9750
President Branch 56

Vice President

Dennis Ryder

Dear Brothers and Sisters of Branch 56.

First, let me introduce myself to those who may not know me. I have been a carrier since 1999, mainly working in zones 49548 and 49508. I was appointed steward of 49548 about 2014, steward of 49546 in 2018 and a Formal A for Wyoming in 2019. Darrell asked me to fill the Vice President role when it was vacated last April. I would like to thank you for the opportunity to serve you. I would also like to thank everyone's thoughts and prayers as my family is going through some personal issues. These mean more than you know and symbolize what we are striving for as a union promoting unity and togetherness.

Enough about me. Let's talk about the we. The Union is not a term to describe five people. The Union is all inclusive. If you pay dues, you are an interictal part of "the Union". Management talks about "the union", mostly in a negative manner. I also hear fellow brothers and sisters disparaging "the union" on the workroom floor. This does not do anything but help management divide carriers, effectively furthering their cause on the workroom floor. I'm not advocating members cannot have an opinion or let people know their opinions, I would love to encourage both. What I am advocating is there is a proper place and time. First, contract training is open to everyone on the last Tuesday of every month. This would be a fantastic time to go over questions and interpretations of all contract issues and concerns. Second, On the first Thursday of every month is the general meeting. There are sections providing opportunities to openly discuss work room floor issues or any other issues the body would like to talk about. Third, ask your supervisor for union time. I do not know of a steward that is not available for questions or comments off the workroom floor. If we don't know the answer, we will go out and find the answer and get back to you. I also know Darrell and myself are available as well. I would underscore, I am not advocating members not having opinions nor pointing out issues. I want to encourage them through the proper forums. Anything that divides us on the workroom floor is a tool that helps management agendas.

As I reflect on the past year, challenging is the thought prevalent in my mind. Covid, long hours, and off the list seem to be mainstays. This brings me to the contractual piece in the article, unscheduled leave. Unscheduled is any absence from work that is not requested and improved in advance. For unscheduled absences, the **employee must** notify the supervisor or proper official (call in line) as soon as the employee realizes he or she will be unable to report to work. **Immediately**, upon returning to duty, **the employee must** submit a (PS) Form 3971, Request for or Notification of Absence, and explain the reason for the unscheduled leave. If this not done the employee is in Awol status. I copied this straight from a recent OIG report. Awol can and will be used against carriers for corrective action. 3971s play an important role in defense of discipline, as well as the most important role-your paycheck! So please fill out your 3971s upon your return. In six months, it's on management not you.

Sincerely,
Dennis Ryder

NALC 56 Annual Golf Outing

August 29th, 2021

Boulder Creek Golf Course



MDA[®]
Golf Classic



MDA[®]
Golf Classic

Collected \$16,472.00 and donated over \$9,000.00 to MDA, which recognized Branch 56 as the October 2021 Branch Challenge 1st Place Winners.

Never Surrender

We as members of one of the largest employers in the USA are at a crossroads in our country. We have had to amend our lives, families, and employment in the dealing with the Covid pandemic. Since it was first addressed back in January of 2020, we as the source of delivery of the mail have had to make many changes in how we treat the mail delivery, from express to business. We had to adjust our family lives when our children were left without schools during work hours. This included but not only quarantines and Covid positive testing but close contacts. We had to adjust our lives with loss of pay during periods over the past TWO YEARS, with the changes in the USPS policies dealing with Covid Exposures. From more expectations with physicians, medical issues and USPS policies that change daily, to the staffing changes when those of us that were still working, must have had to be making constant personal sacrifices for the loss of personnel during these periods. It has become stressful and emotional and very depressing for all concerned, with no end in the foreseeable future. That makes the USPS Mail Carriers one of the most visible people in the country on a daily basis, even more than Doctors and Healthcare and First Responders. We are the face for the public to see the continuation of the fight, to maintain a sense of reality and normalcy. When the public sees the Mail being delivered, it shows them the country is still working, not totally and not without complications, but it is working! Every Mail Carrier.. Every Member of the USPS should take ultimate PRIDE in themselves as the face showing that the country is fighting back against the pandemic. This is a battle that is not close to ending, many members will continue to have hardships and difficulties. Some will not be able to continue to make the steps of sacrifice, that will be certain, but will always be recognized as ones that stood the test of difficulties. It is up to EVERY One of us in the Postal Service to show the public what we can do when we accept the challenge and work making the ultimate mission to have the country back to what it was. Not with the riots and fighting and finger pointing and political flopping, but One Nation, with ONE purpose, to be bigger and better than it was before. When the fight is over and WE THE PEOPLE can stand as One again, free to travel, work and having the pleasure with friends and family again! The USPS and the Mail Carriers will be the face this country will remember!

Bob Pearson

Northwest Station

Retiree Luncheon September 12th, 2021





Anthony Bajdek - Retirement



36 plus years!



Congratulations to Keven Plite, Frank Hamilton and Jeff Baxter on their Retirement in Dec 2021 as well.

How do I get my picture in the newsletter? Someone needs to take your picture and send them to nalc56@comcast.net or nalc56vp@comcast.net

Election Committee

Chairperson: Ted Courter

Members: Larry Hanson & Brian Knight

- A total of 573 members in Good Standing at the time of the November 4th, 2021 General Meeting.
- Could not send ballots to 17 members due to not having a current address on file.
- A total of 556 ballots were mailed.
- The Post Office returned 32 ballots for the following reasons; deceased, moved left no address, no such number, attempted not known, temporarily away, not deliverable as addressed.
- 2 were returned with the members new address.
- 1 ballot was sent directly to the Union Hall instead of the Post Office Box.
- The committee received 192 ballots back.
- 67 ballots were determined to be spoiled "invalid" due to no signature and/or printed name on the outside of the return envelope.
- A total of 125 ballots met the requirements outlined in the instructions and were determined to be valid.

Health Benefits Representative Results: **Mike Schregardus 101**, Robert Pearson 23
Trustees (3): **Jimmy Burns 93, Joe Noel 85, Tonya Casey 61**, Don Graves 59, Lou Wagner 47

All other Executive board positions and National and State delegates was by acclamation.

National Convention Delegates 2022, Chicago, IL

Sarah Lower-Marlatt
Jean Meniga
Mindy Dekker
Michael Blasé
Darrell Helsley
Ulric Graham
Andrea Faulkner

Lou Wagner
Adam Umlor
Robert McCoy
Amy Helsley
Kyle Inosencio
Jamie Nichols
Jim Burns

Tonya Casey
John Adkins
Adrien Loiselle
Mike Schregardus
Betsy Bauer
Kim Ewing

Rebecca Holt
Don Graves
Dennis Ryder
Chris Smith
Michelle Nicholas
Robert Pearson

NO ALTERNATES

Never Give up!!

Dear CCA's,

Welcome To the United States Postal Service. If you've been here more than a week, I am sure any romantic notion of being a letter carrier that you may have had, has fizzled into the night. The endless pivots, 13 and 14-hour days and the tyrannical criticisms from management and career carriers can take their toll on the psyche.

I sit here doing my weekly grievance of management blatantly violating ELM 432.32. I can't help but notice some City Carrier Assistants working more than 80 hrs. a week on a regular basis. Surely the thought of giving up has crossed your mind. Do not do that! "My Family misses me" "What am I missing out on?", "I can't believe my supervisor just talked to me in such a condescending way after I just worked a 13 hour day, and it's my 15th day in a row" Every career carrier around you has been through the same thing. You know what? We did it, so can you, I promise.

Just a few years ago I was a CCA, and I too was pushed to my breaking point. "What's the point" I remember thinking. The point is not giving up was the greatest decision in my life. Today I have a great Job, and when you become a regular, you will have rights and entitlements to the chagrin of management as well.

Sometimes senior Carriers can seem down right mean. Remember that many of them put their heart and soul into their routes, and when things get messed up, they take the brunt of it from the customer. However, some do not remember what it is like to be new, or just do not have any empathy for the pressure management puts you through on a daily basis. Remember, they aren't your boss, just smile and try not to repeat the same mistake. Learn everything you can from older carriers, Emulate the good ones and you'll have a great career. I promise soon if you stick this out, you too will be a career city carrier and perhaps you can be the light in the day for the new CCA.

In conclusion, I just want to let you know that your dedication and hard work is not going un-noticed, even if us regular carriers aren't saying thankyou very much. Your Family and your future will be Incredibly improved if you simply JUST DON'T GIVE UP! I do promise that.

Thank you
Sincerely,
Adam Umlor
Zone 49507 Steward



The best thing one can do
when it's raining is let
it rain.

-Henry Wadsworth Longfellow

Awareness for Covid

Currently the USPS has had an abundance of Covid related medical conditions that qualify under the definitions of Catastrophic Injury, covered as work-related conditions. They could qualify for Worker's Compensation, under the Dept of Labor and USPS policies. Any Mail Carrier that tests positive for Covid and must be quarantined, may desire to make application for this benefit, to be paid for during their time of isolation/quarantine, without using their Personal Sick Leave or Annual Leave. Only those testing positive, NOT close contact, and required to isolate are able to utilize this option, but all need to be aware of the options. File a CA-1 claim at Ecomp.dol.gov – you will need to register online and you can upload your positive test result with the claim.

Controversies of Continuation of Pay (COP)

Employing agencies, their supervisors, and/ or managers, are improperly withholding, delaying, controvert, and terminating continuation of pay (COP). This is a violation of the regulations of the Office of Workers Compensation Programs (OWCP).

Background: Continuation of Pay (C.O.P.) is a substitute for compensation benefits during the first (45) forty five days of an employee's disability, caused by a traumatic on the job injuries. Remember COP only applies for traumatic injuries when filing a CA-1. COP must be requested by the injured employee when the employee completes OWCP's form CA-1. Notice of injury and claim for continuation of pay within (30) thirty days of the injury.

Granting or Controvert COP: OWCP's regulations specify that an employing agency must grant an injured employee's request for COP except in the following six circumstances.

- The disability is caused by an occupational disease or illness, or
- The injury occurred off the employing agency's premises and the employee was not performing official "off Premise" duties, or
- The injury was caused by the employee's willful misconduct, the employee's intent to kill or injure himself or herself or another person, or the employee's intoxication by alcohol or illegal drugs was the proximate cause of the injury, or
- The injury was not reported on Form CA-1 within 30 days following the injury or
- Work stoppage first occurred more that 90 days following the injury, of
- The employee initially reports the injury after his or her employment has terminated.

Although the employing agency may controvert an employee's right to COP for reasons other that the six circumstances listed above, the employee's COP must be initiated and must be continued unless the controversy is sustained by OWCP—or another reason intervenes justifying termination.

Termination of COP

Once COP has been initiated, the employing agency is authorized to terminate COP only if:

- The employee does not provide prima facie medical evidence that a disabling traumatic injury occurred within 10 work days after the employee stops work (except that COP shall be continued without interruption in the absence of such medical evidence if the employing agency is satisfied that the employee sustained a disabling traumatic injury).
- The employing agency receives evidence that the attending physician has found the employee no longer disabled (i.e., the employee can perform the duties of the position held at the time of injury).
- The employing agency receives evidence that the attending physician has found the employee to be partially disabled and the employee refuses suitable work which has been offered by the agency or fails to respond to such offer within five work days of receipt of the offer.
- The employee's scheduled period of employment expires or employment is otherwise terminated, provided the date of termination of employment is established prior to the date of injury.
- The 45-day COP period expires.

The employing agency will also terminate COP if OWCP notifies the employing agency that COP is to be terminated because either:

- OWCP has sustained a controversy of COP by the employing agency or
- OWCP has independently determined that the employee has failed to meet the FECA's eligibility criteria for disability benefits

OWCP will also require the employing agency to suspend COP when it determines that an employee has refused to submit to, or obstructs, a medical examination required by OWCP. The suspension will continue until OWCP determines that the refusal or obstruction stops.

Finally, an employing agency must grant COP unless one of the six circumstances noted above applies. COP cannot be withheld or delayed pending receipt of medical evidence or because the medical evidence is not immediately available. (As noted above, an injured employee has up to 10 work-days to furnish medical evidence.)

Bob Pearson

Northwest Station

NALC BRANCH 56
GRAND RAPIDS MI.
TREASURERS REPORT
for the month of December 2021

CHECKING

BALANCE 1ST OF MONTH	\$137,031.80
DEPOSITS	\$ 9,077.96
TOTAL	\$ 146,109.76
PAID OUT	\$ 6,592.01
BALANCE	\$ 139,517.75

MORTUARY FUND

BALANCE 1ST OF MONTH	\$ 41,232.73
DEPOSITS	\$ 415.50
INTEREST	\$ 0.35
TOTAL	\$ 41,648.58
PAID OUT	\$ -
BALANCE	\$ 41,648.58

NATIONAL CONVENTION

BALANCE 1ST OF MONTH	\$ 80,803.22
DEPOSITS	\$ 1,246.50
INTEREST	\$ 3.44
TOTAL	\$ 82,053.16
PAID OUT	\$ -
BALANCE	\$ 82,053.16

BUILDING FUND

BALANCE 1ST OF MONTH	\$ 11,780.68
DEPOSITS	\$ 1,454.25
INTEREST	\$ 0.10
TOTAL	\$ 13,235.03
PAID OUT	\$ 1,309.52
BALANCE	\$ 11,925.51

ENTERTAINMENT FUND

BALANCE 1ST OF MONTH	\$ 16,093.64
DEPOSITS	\$ 872.55
INTEREST	\$ 0.14
TOTAL	\$ 16,966.33
PAID OUT	\$ 1,236.27
BALANCE	\$ 15,730.06

STATE CONVENTION FUND

BALANCE 1ST OF MONTH	\$ 39,967.78
DEPOSITS	\$ 498.60
INTEREST	\$ 0.34
TOTAL	\$ 40,466.72
PAID OUT	\$ -
BALANCE	\$ 40,466.72

MDA FUND

BALANCE 1ST OF MONTH	\$ 1,711.63
DEPOSITS	\$ -
INTEREST	\$ 0.01
TOTAL	\$ 1,711.64
PAID OUT	\$ -
BALANCE	\$ 1,711.64

TRAINING FUND

BALANCE 1ST OF MONTH	\$ 36,922.28
DEPOSITS	\$ 955.65
INTEREST	\$ 0.31
TOTAL	\$ 37,878.24
PAID OUT	\$ -
BALANCE	\$ 37,878.24

\$ 370,931.66
TOTAL ALL FUNDS

Christine E. Smith

Photo Disclaimer

Cartoon credit is by Terry Flippo – you can follow him in the Facebook Group-Deliver Me!

NOTICE TO ALL CARRIERS!

MANAGEMENT HAS BEEN HAVING PROBLEMS GETTING CCA'S AND

REGULARS

THEIR UNIFORM VOUCHERS AND CITIBANK CREDIT CARDS.

THE VOUCHERS ARE SENT VIA CERTIFIED MAIL AND THE CITIBANK CARDS ARE NOT
FORWARDED.

PLEASE GO ONLINE ON LITEBLUE AND UPDATE YOUR CURRENT ADDRESS WITH
THE POSTAL SERVICE.

SIMPLY DOING A CHANGE OF ADDRESS WILL NOT UPDATE YOUR HOME ADDRESS
THAT IS ON FILE.

PLEASE NOTIFY BRANCH 56 WHEN YOU
CHANGE YOUR MAILING ADDRESS.
MAIL CHANGES TO: 1680 VIEWPOND DR SUITE A
KENTWOOD, MI 49508
OR
EMAIL: Nalc56vp@comcast.net
PHONE: (616) 458-8611

LCPF Disclaimer

By making a contribution to the Letter Carrier Political Fund, you are doing so voluntarily with the understanding that your contribution is not a condition of membership in the National Association of Letter Carriers or of employment by the Postal Service, nor is it part of union dues. You have a right to refuse to contribute without any reprisal. The Letter Carrier Political Fund will use the money it receives to contribute to candidates for federal office and undertake other political spending as permitted by law. Your selection shall remain in full force and effect until cancelled. Contributions to the Letter Carrier Political Fund are not deductible for federal income tax purposes. Federal law prohibits the Letter Carrier Political Fund from soliciting contributions from individuals who are not NALC members, executive and administrative staff or their families. Any contribution received from such an individual will be refunded to that contributor. Federal law requires us to use our best efforts to collect and report the name, mailing address, occupation and name of employer of individuals whose contributions exceed \$200 per calendar year. Any guideline amount is merely a suggestion, and an individual is free to contribute more or less than the guideline suggests and the Union will not favor or disadvantage anyone by reason of the amount of their contribution or their decision not to contribute.

National Association of Letter
Carriers Branch 56
1680 Viewpond Dr Suite A
Kentwood, MI 49508

ADDRESS SERVICE
REQUESTED



Non-Profit
U.S. Postage Paid
Permit # 292
Grand Rapids
Michigan

www.nalc56.org

**Branch meetings are the
first Thursday of each month**

**Branch training is last
Tuesday of each month**

**ALL MEMBERS ARE
WELCOME**

**Food and refreshments are
provided.**

USPS EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE PROGRAM
A Program You Can Trust



800-327-4968

(800-EAP-4-YOU) TTY: 877-492-7341

www.EAP4YOU.com

**The opinions expressed are that of the author and not
necessarily of Branch # 56 or the NALC**