

*The Official Newsletter of  
NJ Merged Branch 38, NALC*



# THE SENTINEL

February 2021



**President**

**by Mike O'Neill**

**COVID 19 continues to impact all of us and every aspect of** our daily lives. It is my hope that the State and Federal governments get their acts together and get the vaccines to everyone who is willing to take them as soon as possible. Until then, we are still in the midst of a deadly pandemic, and must take every possible precaution, both at work and at home. Please try to maintain a social distance of six feet or more, wear a face covering, wash your hands and keep them away from your face, and avoid crowds, especially inside. Your life and health and, that of your family and friends, have to be our highest priority. Don't let your guard down.

**The ratification process for the recently negotiated Tentative National Agreement is underway.** Every active NALC member should have received a ballot, a copy of the agreement, and a summary of changes in the mail by now. If you have not, please call 202-393-4836 immediately, so a second ballot can be mailed to you. The secret ballots must be received by the Election Committee no later than March 1, 2021. This is an extension of the original date of February 16, 2021. If you have received your ballot, please return it right away. The Executive Board of NJ Merged Branch 38 has unanimously voted in support of ratification, and urges you to support it as well. Regardless of your support or opposition, we encourage every member to have their voice heard. With that in mind, Branch 38 will enter the names of all who participate in the balloting into a raffle for a 65 inch smart TV. Just show your sealed ballot to your shop steward before mailing.

**Making plans for our normal Branch activities has also been** impacted by COVID-19. Our monthly Branch Meeting will continue to be held via Zoom, as will our Shop Steward and Retirement training. We all look forward to the day the limits on gatherings are lifted, but will continue to honor the government restrictions in the interest of the health and safety of our members and their families.

**Our retiree events have been especially impacted. The luncheon** honoring our members who retired in 2019, should have been held in April of last year. It had to be postponed. The luncheon for the class of 2020 has also been postponed. It is our hope that the retirees from both years will be able to come together for a luncheon on October 10, 2021. Invitations will be mailed to each retiree as the date approaches, and if the safety of the attendees can be assured. The retiree jackets for the class of 2019 have been mailed out, and the jackets for the class of 2020 will be presented at the luncheon. If we have to postpone the luncheon again, those jackets will also be mailed out, and we will set another date in 2022.

**The Retiree Breakfasts, both in the north and south, had to be** cancelled last year. The October 24, 2021 Breakfast in Belleville is still on the schedule, as of now, and plans for a Breakfast in Toms River will be made as soon as it becomes safe. Please keep your eye on the Sentinel and web site for further announcements regarding these and all Branch 38 events.

**Although our efforts in support of MDA took a major hit last** year because of the pandemic, we are determined to get back on track in 2021, starting with our Shamrocks for MDA campaign in honor of our brother Bob Paccioretti. We also have scheduled our Day at the Races at Monmouth Park on May 23, 2021, pending the lifting of restrictions that forced us to cancel last year. Plans for our Jets Ticket Raffle, Tough Mudder, Beefsteak Dinner and more for the fall are moving ahead in the hope that all things will be back to normal by then. Your support for these fund raising efforts and for those living with muscular dystrophy and their families is greatly appreciated.

**I close by thanking all of our members for their work and service** to the American public, and for standing strong together throughout these very difficult times. Be well and be safe.

# NEW JERSEY MERGED BRANCH 38

**National Association of Letter Carriers**

**374 Morris Avenue  
Springfield, NJ 07081**

**Phone  
973-564-7244**

**e-mail  
NALC38@VERIZON.NET**

**FAX  
973-564-7673**

## Branch Officers

Michael J.O'Neill	President
Dan Szucs	Executive Vice President
Joseph S. Rutkoski III	Treasurer
Mark McGrady	Director of City Delivery
Christine A. Strasser	Financial Secretary
Pete Bednarz	Full-Time Area Rep
Roy Jancio	Sergeant-At-Arms
Ron Villegas	Director of Retirees

### BRANCH 38 TRUSTEES

Keith Hemmings	Richard O'Connell Jr.
Joseph Otero	Armando Pedreira
	Dominic Walton

### PART TIME AREA REPRESENTATIVES

Clint Colie	Michael Hedglin
Roy Jancio	Joe Otero
Armando Pedreira	Ernesto Rivera
Dominic Walton	Joseph Zammito

### NATIONAL BUSINESS AGENT

Larry Cirelli 212-868-0284

### BRANCH 38 ATTORNEY

Donald Millman, Esq. 973-669-9776

### MUTUAL BENEFIT REPRESENTATIVE

Tamara Humphrey 973-444-5128

## DATES TO REMEMBER

### BRANCH MEETINGS

March 3, 2021  
April 7, 2021  
May 5, 2021

### SPECIAL EVENTS

Shamrock Campaign  
January-March, 2021

Shop Steward Training  
February 9, 2021

President's Day  
February 15, 2021

Shop Steward Training  
March 9, 2021

MDA Day at the Races  
May 23, 2021

**NJ Merged Branch 38  
Web Site**

<http://www.branch38nalc.com/>

# *Shamrocks for MDA*



## *Executive Vice President*

### **by Dan Szucs**

**The NALC was the first national sponsor of MDA in 1953, and MDA continues to be the NALC's official charity.** Our MDA committee meets every year to discuss our fundraising efforts and to look for new ideas. For many years Letter Carrier Robert Paccioiretti would go on his own and request shamrocks from MDA to distribute to every store and bar in the town that he delivered mail. Anyone that Bobby met realized what a humble man he was. Year after year Bob would help Branch 38 assist MDA and the families that they serve. Unfortunately, Bob passed away in 2017, after a long battle with cancer.

**Our MDA committee decided to roll out the Shamrocks campaign throughout all our post offices we represent, in Bob's honor.** We turned it into a challenge for every office to post the shamrocks on the bulletin board and send pictures of the shamrocks. The letter carriers of Branch 38 responded by purchasing over \$16,000.00 the first two years. Even during the COVID pandemic last year, our members contributed over \$6,000.00. I know that Robert is looking down on this, and is very honored and proud of the success of this fundraiser.

**The officers and staff of NJ Merged Branch 38 want to continue the tradition this year in honor of Bob.** We are asking all of Branch 38 Shop Stewards to sell the Shamrocks to the carriers in their offices, and to place the Shamrocks on the UNION bulletin boards. Each Shamrock will cost \$5.00 and will be proudly displayed in every office of Branch 38 through the month of March.

**It has been a tough year for the MDA community. Kids and adults living with neuromuscular disease face a higher health risk and risk of isolation.** There is a lot of uncertainty regarding the future of the coronavirus right now. One thing is certain, we must continue to support MDA so they will continue to have enough resources to support the families they serve, both now and after this virus is gone.

**Resources are needed so that the MDA summer camps will continue once the virus is over.** Branch 38 representatives have attended, over the past few years, MDA summer camp, and en-

joyed seeing the kids have the time of their lives. The expression on their faces makes it rewarding to know that the money raised by our members is providing these children that joy.

**The pandemic has caused cancellations of a lot of MDA fundraiser events.** MDA has several events throughout the year where people would come together to participate in these fundraisers. A couple of examples would be the walk-a-thon, bowling night, Hop-a-thon and the Firefighters Fill the Boot fundraiser. MDA has decided to follow the CDC guidelines on social distancing and have postponed all events for April and May.

**The National Association of Letter Carriers was the first national sponsor of MDA.** Our national headquarters has participated in several fund-raising efforts that included National President Fredric Rolando being locked up behind bars, and taking donations to set him free. NALC Fill-the-Satchel Day and the National Bowl-A-Thon to raise money for MDA, because of the pandemic, all had to be postponed. NALC sent out to all branches a donation challenge to help raise funds to send in for their yearly contribution.

**The COVID pandemic has hurt Branch 38's effort to support MDA.** During the year, Branch 38 holds several fundraisers. The John Sheridan Day at the Races at Monmouth park, Jets ticket raffle, our annual beef steak fundraiser and our annual Tough Mudder events were all postponed as per CDC guideline. We have two other fund raisers that have been successful in raising money for MDA. They are the Charlie Connell Golf Outing and the MDA bracelet fundraiser.

**The letter carriers of Branch 38 have proven during the pandemic and during the 2020 National election how strong and dedicated they really are.** You have proven that strength in making the Shamrocks for MDA a success over the past three years. Please accept the challenge and support MDA by buying a Shamrock. Your shop stewards will post the shamrocks on the Union bulletin board. The stewards will take pictures with the carriers from that office and we will be posting them on the Branch's website and Facebook page, showing no matter what we are up against we all come together.

*Check Out The New*  
*Branch 38*  
*Facebook Page*  
*"NJ Merged Branch 38"*

# *March & April Membership Meetings* *February & March Shop Steward Training*

In the best interest of the safety and health of our members and their families, and given the Governor's regulations regarding gatherings during the current COVID-19 pandemic, the monthly Branch 38 meetings and training sessions will continue to be conducted via Zoom. Attached below is the information regarding how to attend the meetings on your computer or phone.

## Topic: Branch 38 LMOU Training

Time: Feb 9, 2021 07:30 PM

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/6988072647>

Meeting ID: 698 807 2647

One tap mobile

+13017158592,,6988072647# US (Washington D.C)

+13126266799,,6988072647# US (Chicago)

Dial by your location

+1 301 715 8592 US (Washington D.C)

+1 312 626 6799 US (Chicago)

+1 646 558 8656 US (New York)

+1 253 215 8782 US (Tacoma)

+1 346 248 7799 US (Houston)

+1 669 900 9128 US (San Jose)

Meeting ID: 698 807 2647

Find your local number:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/6988072647>

## Topic: March Membership Meeting

Time: March 3, 2021 07:30 PM

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/6988072647>

Meeting ID: 698 807 2647

One tap mobile

+13017158592,,6988072647# US (Washington D.C)

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+1 346 248 7799 US (Houston)

+1 669 900 9128 US (San Jose)

Meeting ID: 698 807 2647

Find your local number:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/6988072647>

## Topic: Shop Steward Training

Time: March 9, 2021 07:30 PM

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/6988072647>

Meeting ID: 698 807 2647

One tap mobile

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+1 346 248 7799 US (Houston)

+1 669 900 9128 US (San Jose)

Meeting ID: 698 807 2647

Find your local number:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/6988072647>

## Topic: April Membership Meeting

Time: April 7, 2021 07:30 PM

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/6988072647>

Meeting ID: 698 807 2647

One tap mobile

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+1 301 715 8592 US (Washington D.C)

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+1 346 248 7799 US (Houston)

+1 669 900 9128 US (San Jose)

Meeting ID: 698 807 2647

Find your local number:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/6988072647>

## *Parlin Letter Carrier Heroes*



**Pictured Above: Parlin Postmaster James Tee and Carriers James Nolan and Joseph Hayes**

Shortly before 5:00 PM on Thursday, January 14, 2021, Postmaster James Tee and City Carrier Joseph Hayes, of the Parlin N.J. office, heard loud yelling coming from the parking lot of the Post Office. They ran out to the parking lot, and discovered a woman pinned under the front end of a large sedan. The woman was conscious, but was bleeding heavily from the mouth. Her husband was there, and pleading for help. The driver of the car was clearly in shock.

A second city carrier, James Nolan, had just pulled into the parking lot as the PM and Joe arrived at the scene. The three men, with the help of some other customers, were able to lift the vehicle up and gently slide the woman out from under the car. The PM had called 911 immediately, and an EMT, housed just down the street, arrived to assist the woman. She was taken by ambulance to a nearby hospital. The woman's husband came to the Parlin Post Office recently to thank everyone. He reported that his wife suffered many very serious injuries, but is expected to recover after many months of treatment and rehab. He said that given the nature of her injuries, there is no doubt that her life was saved by the actions of these three Postal employees. Great job!

### *Shamrocks for MDA* *In Honor Of* *Bob Paccioretti*

Third Annual Shamrocks for MDA fund raiser in honor of Bob Paccioretti. Bob was a leader and loyal supporter of Branch 38, especially our efforts in support of MDA.

We lost Bob on March 23, 2017 to a battle with cancer. Each year Bob would ask various businesses in his community to sell Shamrocks for MDA. He would raise several hundred dollars each year.

We have continued this tradition in Bob's memory, selling Shamrocks in the Post Offices in Branch 38, raising over \$16,000 during the past two years. You can support this effort by contacting your Shop Steward or Area Rep, or by mailing in a contribution to the Branch office.

### *MDA Day at the Races*

Monmouth Park Race Track  
175 Oceanport Ave, Oceanport, NJ

Sunday, May 23, 2021  
Gates Open at 11:30 AM  
First Race is at 12:50 PM

\$50.00 Per Person Includes:  
Beer, Soda & Water  
Cheeseburgers, Ribs, Chicken, Salads,  
Corn on the Cob & Watermelon  
Admission & Programs

For Tickets Call  
Armando Pedreira: 973-564-7244 (Ext.19)  
or Contact Your Area Rep

All Proceeds Go Directly to MDA

# Local Negotiation Preparation



**Director**  
**of**  
**City**  
**Delivery**

**by Mark McGrady**

To those of you who have not heard, NALC and the Postal Service have agreed to a Tentative National Agreement. That Tentative National Agreement, an explanation of the changes from the 2016 National Agreement, and a secret ballot requesting your approval for ratification have been mailed to all active NALC members. If the Agreement is ratified by the members, each office will be tasked with negotiating the 22 Items in their Local Memorandum of Understanding, LMOU. Those negotiations will run from April 29, 2021 thru May 28, 2021.

All members of the NALC in each office should have a copy of their LMOU. If you do not have a copy of your LMOU, ask your Shop Steward or Area Representative for one. Everyone should review their LMOU for any possible suggestions for changes. Those suggestions should be discussed with the members and your

Area Representative. If need be, these suggestions should be brought to the membership for a vote. If you wish to open negotiations for changes to the LMOU, the union must inform the Postmaster in writing as soon as possible. If all the members are satisfied with the language in their LMOU, then you can inform the Postmaster you do not wish to open negotiations. Remember management also has the right to open negotiations.

**Regardless of whether or not either party wishes to open negotiations, you should have an action plan.** That action plan should consist of a committee of members to negotiate, proposals you might wish to negotiate, and dates, times, and locations to meet.

**These are challenging times, and setting up meetings to speak with the members and management will be difficult** because of the coronavirus. Meetings can be set up on the work room floor, before or after your tour, or in the parking lot with management's permission and following CDC guidelines; wearing masks and social distancing. If setting up a couple of smaller meetings works, then do that. If suggestions have been given, you can take those suggestions, put them in a survey and have the members vote on them. You can even set up a zoom meeting with the members in the office. I suggest you use these same methods when your committee sits down with management to negotiate. The Shop Steward should work closely with the Area Representative throughout the process.

**Staying safe during the local negotiations is our number one priority.** Express that to all of the members in your office, and work together to conduct and conclude negotiations with everyone's safety in mind.

**Sign Up for the Letter Carrier Political Fund Now!!!**

**Protect Your Job and Your Benefits From Legislative Attacks**

**Go to: <http://nalc.org/>**

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 in a calendar year.

# ***COVID MOU's Extended***



***Treasurer***

**by Joseph Rutkoski**

The NALC and the USPS have recently signed Memorandum of Understanding M-01932. This MOU extends the original MOU's related to COVID-19 pandemic until March 26, 2021. These MOU's address the following

- **M-01910** Temporarily expands the use of sick leave for dependent care. This memorandum does not grant the employee any additional sick leave. The employee is still only entitled to 80 hours of sick leave for dependent care. However, it temporarily allows for the employee to use SLDC for unexpected childcare needs because of the COVID-19 pandemic.
- **M-01911** Temporary Additional 80 hours of leave for CCA's for use in conjunction with the COVID-19 pandemic. This is leave in addition to the leave already granted to a CCA, but applies strictly to COVID-19 related absences
- **M-01913** Temporary use of carriers 7:01 rule
- **M-01914** Liberal leave and change of schedules. This memorandum instructs USPS management to allow liberal changes of schedules in recognition of the disruption caused by COVID-19 such as childcare issues caused by day care closure, schools (Prek through 12) closures, or the unavailability of a primary caregiver because of the COVID-19 pandemic.
- **M-01915** Temporary changes to promote social distancing. This memorandum promotes social distancing recommendations in the workplace such as increased physical spacing between employees of at least six feet apart, staggered start times, limits large work-related gatherings and reduces or eliminates traveling between offices.

**Management is also instructed to allow for liberal sick leave use for employees who are sick and liberal annual and (LWOP) usage during the pandemic. This leave should be treated as sched-**

ules (as opposed to unscheduled) leave. Leave taken for COVID-19 related reasons, may not be cited in discipline for failing to maintain an assigned schedule under ELM511.43

**It is important to note the differences to the above MOU's and the Family First Corona Virus Response Act (FFCRA) that ended on December 31, 2020.**

**The emergency provisions included under the Families First Corona Virus Response Act mandated by Congress were in effect only from April 1, 2020 through December 31, 2020. They included the following:**

**Emergency sick Leave (80 hours of additional sick leave)** Employees were eligible to use up to 80 hours of emergency paid sick leave based on average number of hours worked in a 2-week period. This leave was available to both career and non-career employees regardless of tenure.

**This legislation was meant to ensure that workers are not forced to choose between their paychecks and the public health measures needed to combat the COVID-19 virus. Unfortunately, as of this writing, Congress has yet to extend the FFCRA. The NALC will continue to lobby congress for an extension of this act that greatly benefited letter carriers in these incredibly challenging times. It is our hope that with a new Congress and under a new President, these concerns will be addressed in the very near future.**

## ***Membership Recognition***

The NALC provides lapel pins in recognition for membership of 25 years or more, for each additional five years. We also award Gold Cards for 50 years of membership, and plaques for 70 & 75 years of membership. The Gold Card comes with the added benefit of no more dues. All of these special awards are available upon request. If you believe that you are entitled to any of these awards, contact Director of Retirees, Ron Villegas at 973-564-7244 (Ext.21) and we will check our records and request the awards from NALC Headquarters. Thanks to all of you for your loyal support.

# COVID-19 Leave Options



**Financial**  
**Secretary**

**by Christine Strasser**

**Families First Coronavirus Response Act (FFCRA),** which required employers to provide paid sick leave and paid expanded family medical leave for limited reasons related to COVID-19, ended on December 31, 2020. The only possible way for the leave provisions of FFCRA to be extended, would be through an amendment to the law by Congress. Unfortunately, no amendments have been passed, and many NALC members are wondering how they will be paid until there is an amendment or COVID-19 is over. There are a couple of options available to both career letter carriers and city carrier assistants (CCA's).

**Two Memorandums of Understanding (MOU) have been extended** through March 26, 2021 via M-01932. M-01910, *Re: Temporary Expanded Sick Leave for Dependent Care During COVID-19*, allows employees to use sick leave for unexpected childcare needs as a result of the pandemic. Under this MOU, in the event an employee must care for a child as a result of daycare or school closures, or if the primary caregiver is unavailable, the employee may use sick leave for dependent care. This MOU has an eighty hour limit of sick leave, and is subject to normal procedures for approval. M-01911, *Re: Temporary Additional Paid Leave for CCA's*, permits CCA's to use paid leave up to eighty

hours in addition to their earned annual leave, for certain circumstances under the pandemic. The paid leave must be approved in advance, unless for emergencies, and be submitted using a PS Form 3971. The CCA's will not be allotted any extra hours due to their break in service, and any additional balance will be forfeited.

**If a career employee tests positive for COVID-19, and does not** have a sick leave balance, Advanced Sick Leave, can be requested. The sick leave may be advanced for an employee's illness when it is documented that the employee is expected to return to duty. Installation heads can approve up to thirty days (240 hours) of sick leave, by completing a PS Form 1221, and forwarding the form to Eagan ASC, when the sick leave is authorized. Advanced sick leave must be used for the approved illness, and be deducted in increments of four hours per pay period.

**Another option available is the Family Medical Leave Act (FMLA).** FMLA guarantees eligible employees up to twelve weeks of protected leave each postal leave year. An eligible employee must be employed by the Postal Service for twelve months, and have at least 1,250 workhours during the last twelve month period. When requesting FMLA for COVID-19 related illness, it is for the employee's own serious health condition that prevents him or her from performing their duties. The employee can use sick leave, annual leave, or leave without pay to cover them during their absence. The employee is protected from adverse administrative or disciplinary action.

**The above options do not provide the same benefits as the** Families First Coronavirus Response Act. Please contact your area representative for specific questions and issues pertaining to your leave options. It is unfortunate Congress has been unable, thus far, to make an amendment to cover employees until this dreadful pandemic is over. NALC is lobbying Congress for an extension of the FFCRA, and is hopeful with a new Congress and President in office.

## Download The NALC Member App

The app contains links to workplace resources, including the National Agreement, the JCAM, the MRS, CCA resources and more. It also includes legislative tools, such as a bill tracker, an individualized list of your congressional representatives and PAC information. And one of the coolest features: an Interactive Non-Scheduled Days calendar. Available for iPhone and Android smartphones. The app is available at the Apple App Store or the Google Play Store. Search for "NALC Member App." Go to NALC.org for more information.

## Download The NALC Workhour Tracker App

The app allows real time basic clock ring entries such as "begin tour," "office and street moves" and "end tour." It will automatically calculate the number of hours of straight time, overtime and penalty time you should be paid each pay period based on the entries made. Once entries are made in the app, the data will be available in the Members Only portal, where it can be edited, and reports can be printed. Go to NALC.org for more information. This tool is made available by NALC to help to make sure our members are paid for the hours worked.



# Help is Available - EAP



**by Pete Bednarz**

**Full-Time  
Area Rep/  
HBP Rep**

We are all being affected by the global spread of Coronavirus COVID 19. We could not wait to close the door on the year 2020, however Coronavirus is still here. The CDC reports that the virus is in fact spreading more than ever before and will continue until most Americans get vaccinated.

The past year has definitely been a challenge for letter carriers. We have had hundreds of Branch 38 members testing positive or being forced to quarantine due to family members testing positive. Carriers have been working up to 12 hours, 7 days a week due to staffing issues caused by the virus. Parents have had to make tough decisions on whether to go to work or stay home because schools and day care centers have been closed. Most of us have been worried about our elderly parents catching this virus. Our relaxing time such as going on vacation, going out to a restaurant, or going out to a ball game has disappeared.

The job of a letter carrier is difficult and stressful under normal conditions. The stress and anxiety of performing our job during COVID has taken a toll on all of us. Like everyone else, letter carriers must sometimes confront a personal crisis. Please understand that you are not alone. EAP is available for you to get through difficult times.

The USPS Employee Assistance Program (EAP) is available to any postal employee, and to family members living in the employee's household, to help with life's challenges. It's a free, voluntary and confidential program that offers assessment, counseling, consultation, life coaching, critical response, and training to postal employees and their families. EAP counselors can assess problems and refer a postal worker in need to whatever resources are available. Some reasons a postal employee might turn to EAP include difficulty dealing with family, children, marriage, parenting, divorce, care for the elderly, childcare, depression and other emotional issues, grief or loss, substance abuse, anxiety, job performance and personal or work relationship problems.

You can call EAP's service center at 800-EAP-4YOU (800-327-4968), which is available 24/7. You can also find a library of information about all kinds of life challenges, including self-assessments, resources for parents and caregivers of the elderly, and tools and calculators for making financial, legal or personal decisions on EAP's web site, EAP4you.com.

Any contact with EAP or counselors is confidential, even when they relate to work. The confidentiality of conversations with EAP counselors is protected by federal and state laws as well as by professional ethical standards. Remember that EAP is a valuable benefit and resource for our members. It is jointly administered by NALC, APWU and the USPS.

Letter carriers also have mental health coverage through their FEHB Health Insurance Plans. If you are a member of the NALC High Option Plan, you have the option to reach out to Optum Health Behavioral Solutions by calling 877-468-1016. A representative is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Your mental health is just as important as your physical health. Mental health consists of a person's emotional, psychological, and social well being. An illness such as depression could lead to long lasting physical problems such as stroke, diabetes or heart disease. We all go through stress in life, but when it gets so bad that we are less able to function on a daily basis, then it's time to make a phone call to see your doctor or mental health professional. Warning signs of mental illness are feelings of depression, anxiety, excessive anger, increased sadness, withdrawing from friends and family, thoughts of self-harm, and increased substance or alcohol abuse.

Optum Health is there to provide emotional support for you and your family. There are many useful resources available on the Optum website, which you can access at Nalchbp.org. You can find providers to schedule an office visit or Tele-mental/Virtual visit by calling 877-468-1016, or by going to the Optum website.

Be safe, be healthy, use the resources that are easily available to you. We will all get through this COVID-19 epidemic and hopefully get back to our normal lives soon.

## **Contract Ratification Ballot**

Ballots regarding the ratification of the Tentative National Agreement have been sent to all active NALC members. They must be received back no later than March 1, 2021. If you have not yet received a ballot, please call 202-393-4836 as soon as possible. None of the terms of the Tentative Agreement will be put into effect until and unless the Agreement is ratified by the membership. That includes wage increases and COLA's, retroactive payments, and automatic conversion of CCA's. Please return your ballot immediately.

# Branch 38 Hero Awards



**Sergeant**  
**at**  
**Arms**

**by Roy Jancio**

**Article VIII, Section 3 of the NJ Merged Branch 38 By-Laws** provides: “An award for heroic achievement shall be presented to qualified Branch 38 members whose actions have distinguished them as heroes and/or heroines.”

**Early last year, President O'Neill appointed a three member committee** consisting of Clint Colie, Joe Otero, and myself, and tasked us with organizing the Branch 38 Heroic Achievement Award. The committee met and returned to the Executive Board with a recommendation to award three Heroic Achievement Awards each year. Their recommendation was accepted by the Executive Board by unanimous consent. All were in agreement that members who go above and beyond to contribute to the communities in which they serve should be recognized and honored.

**The first award is the Letter Carrier Food Drive award.** The purpose of this award is to raise awareness in the local offices and the communities about the NALC annual Food Drive. Many new carriers are not aware of the impact and importance of the Letter carrier Food Drive to their communities and to those in need of assistance. There are also many community organizations which can help get the word out, or even participate in the Letter Carrier Food Drive. We want to recognize members who make the extra effort to promote the annual Food Drive.

**The second award is the MDA Award. The Muscular Dystrophy Association** has been the NALC's charity of choice since the 1950's, and Branch 38 has always been one of the leading Branches in the NALC in raising money for this most worthy cause. Our success in this endeavor is due to the participation and dedication of our members. We think it important to recognize and thank members who step up and go the extra mile in our efforts to support MDA and the families that they serve.

**The third award is community achievement. This award will** be given to someone who does something in the community that anyone would be proud of. Examples of this award would include anything from assisting a customer during a time of extreme emer-

gency to donating time and effort to a community project. The list is endless. Every day, letter carriers are the eyes and ears of the communities that they serve. We want to acknowledge their contribution.

**The main goal for the awards is to remind the community that** letter carriers do more than just deliver mail. We are an intricate part of every community, and are always there to lend a helping hand. The importance of showing the community that we are there for them has never been more important. The public has always supported letter carriers and the Postal Service. We need to continue to earn and nurture that support.

**In 2020 we had three winners for Hero Achievement Award.** The Letter Carrier Food Drive was cancelled this year due to COVID-19. The Executive Board decided to give three awards out anyway. The first winner was for the MDA Hero Award. Letter carrier Pete Marchesani of the Parsippany Post Office was the winner of this award. Pete has been helping out for years at MDA events. He has donated his time, and often had products donated by his brother's business for MDA events. This year, Pete had an idea to host an MDA event at his brother's bar. The event was a success. Pete managed to raise over \$600 this year during these trying times. Great job Pete!!

**There were two winners of the Heroic Achievement Award.** The first winner was Zachary Garb of the Mahwah Post Office. Zachary was conducting his daily rounds when he noticed through the front door that one of his customers on the ground. The customer had fractured her humerus. To make matters even worse the elderly lady had been watching her 21 month old granddaughter. Zachary quickly contacted the woman's daughter, and waited for someone to arrive before continuing on his daily rounds. If it was not for Zachary, this situation could have ended even worse for the women and the grandchild. Way to go Zachary!!

**The second winner of the Heroic Achievement Award is Kelly Hahn-Richards** of the East Brunswick Post Office. Kelly was performing her normal delivery duties when she noticed smoke coming out of a window of a residence. Kelly immediately called 911. No one was home at the time, but if it not had been for Kelly the home would have probably been a total loss instead of just minor fire damage. Awesome job Kelly!!

**All three of the winners were commended by the Branch 38 Executive Board,** and each will receive a Hero jacket and a plaque recognizing them for their heroic achievement. So, please make sure everyone participates in the Letter carrier Food Drive and MDA events. Let your Area Representative know if any Branch 38 member goes above and beyond to help their communities. Continue to stay safe and healthy during 2021.

# ***NJ Merged Branch 38 Scholarship Application***

NJ Merged Branch 38 is proud to announce that we are now accepting applications for our 36th annual scholarships in honor of former Executive Board Member of NJ Merged Branch 38, Michael J. McTigue, former Branch Chaplin, Gil Hampton, former National Secretary Treasurer, Richard O'Connell, and former State Association President Tony Massa.

All four scholarships are in the amount of \$1,500 and will be awarded to four dependents of Branch 38 members in their final year of high school. The scholarships will be presented to the winners at the Branch Meeting on June 2, 2021 at the Woodbridge Elk's Lodge #2116, 665 Rahway Avenue, Woodbridge, NJ.

To be eligible, the applicant must be the son or daughter of an active or retired member of Branch 38, and must be graduating from an accredited secondary school this year, and planning entry into an accredited college or university this September. Other applicants will be considered where a member of Branch 38 is shown to be the student's primary source of dependency.

Interested applicants should fill in the accompanying form on this page, and provide the requested information in a legible manner and send, along with their High School transcript to: NJ Merged Branch 38 Scholarships, 374 Morris Avenue, Springfield, NJ 07081-1106.

The transcript must include S.A.T. scores, scholastic records, and any extra-curricular activities participated in. Recommendations of faculty or guidance personnel may also be included.

For questions or additional information, please contact Mike O'Neill at 973-564-7244 (Ext. 18).

**APPLICATIONS MUST BE RECEIVED  
NO LATER THAN  
MAY 15, 2021**

## **2021 SCHOLARSHIP APPLICATION**

**Name:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Address:** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Phone #:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date of Birth:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Name of Branch 38 Member  
(Parent or Guardian)**  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Office Employed:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Name & Address of High School:**  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**List of Colleges or Universities Applied To:**  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Signature of Applicant:**  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Signature of Member:**  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**THE SENTINEL**  
NJ Merged Branch 38, NALC  
374 Morris Avenue  
Springfield, NJ 07081

NON-PROFIT  
U.S. POSTAGE  
**PAID**  
PERMIT #398  
TRENTON, NJ

**ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED**



## **Branch Meeting Information & Directions**

Meetings are held at 7:30 PM on the first Wednesday of each month, except July & August.

The Branch Meetings are held at:

**ELKS BPO LODGE #2116**  
**665 RAHWAY AVENUE**  
**WOODBIDGE, NJ 07095**  
**732-634-2116**

**Directions:**

**SOUTH** on Garden State Parkway. Take Exit #129 to Route 9 North to Woodbridge Exit (Just after the Forge Restaurant on your right). At the end of the Exit Ramp, turn right onto Main Street (Route 514) and proceed until you reach a monument at City Hall. Bear left onto Rahway Avenue. The Elks is @1/2 mile down the road on your left.

**NORTH** on Garden State Parkway. Take Exit #127 to Route 9 North and follow directions above.

**NJ Turnpike.** Take Exit 12 (Carteret). Bear right after toll booth and turn left at light after overpass. Proceed through industrial park to Rahway Avenue and turn left. The Elks is 1 mile ahead on your right.