

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



# THE SENTINEL

September 2022

## *NALC National Convention*

**The 72nd Bi-Annual Convention of the National Association of Letter Carriers** took place on August 8-12, 2022 in Chicago, Ill. The Convention included a keynote address by President Fredric Rolando in which he reviewed the challenges and turmoil faced by our union throughout the last four years. Rolando also addressed the challenges and goals that lie ahead for letter carriers and NALC

**Several speakers addressed the delegation throughout the week.** These included USPS Board of Governors member Lee Moak, United Mine Worker President Cecil Roberts, Representative James Comer (R-KY), Representative Hakeem Jeffries (D-NY), AFL-CIO President Liz Schuler, Senator Dick Durbin (D-IL), and Representative Robin Kelly (D-IL). We were also treated to a video message from President Joe Biden.

**The delegates considered, debated and voted on many National Agreement Resolutions, General Resolutions, and Constitutional Amendments throughout the week.** It is always interesting to hear the opinions of fellow union brothers and sisters from around the country regarding issues facing the Postal Service and NALC. The debates were often heated but always respectful.

**Nominations for the ten national resident officers, three trustee positions, and fifteen National Business Agents** were made on Wednesday. Four of the ten national resident officers were not contested and were awarded by consent. The remaining six offices have been contested, as were the three trustee positions. Those positions will be decided by secret ballot vote of the membership during the coming weeks. The NJ Merged Branch Executive Board has unanimously voted to support, and ask for your support, of the Renfroe/Barner ticket, which includes Brian Renfroe, President, Paul Barner, Executive Vice President, Nicole Rhine, Secretary-Treasurer, Daniel Toth, Director of Retired Members, James Yates, Director of Life Insurance, and Stephanie Stewart, Director, Health Benefit Plan. The Ren-

froe/Barner ticket also includes three nominees for Trustee; Lawrence Brown, Jr., Sandra Laemmel, and Charles Heege. There are two contested National Business Agent positions. One in Region 1 and one in Region 9.

**NJ Merged Branch 38 was well represented by our delegates,** and received much recognition for the hard work and generosity of our members. Thursday turned out to be Branch 38 day at the Convention. Douglas Adams, Jr., Shop Steward from Newark, opened the Thursday session by singing the National Anthem. Doug brought the house down and made us all very proud. Later that day Branch 38 received several first place awards for our work on behalf of the Letter Carrier Political Fund and our fund raising efforts on behalf of the Muscular Dystrophy Association. On Friday morning, it was announced that President Michael O'Neill had been elected to serve as a delegate to the AFL-CIO Convention. This was another acknowledgment of the superior accomplishments of the members of Branch 38.

**The highlight of the Convention for the delegation from Branch 38** was on Thursday during the nominations for Regional offices when the entire delegation went to the microphone to stand behind President O'Neill when he nominated Bruce Didriksen to be the next Region 15 National Business Agent. Bruce was awarded the position by consent without opposition. Bruce received congratulatory hand shakes from the entire delegation from Region 15, including retiring Region 15 NBA, Larry Cirelli. We all look forward to working with Bruce as he assumes his new office. Congratulations and you can count on our continued support.

**We would also like to take this opportunity to congratulate** Larry Cirelli on his well deserved retirement, and thank him for his many years of service to the members of Region 15. We all wish Larry a long, healthy, and happy retirement.

# 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	Corresponding Secretary
Pete Bednarz	Full-Time Area Rep
Roy Jancio	Recording Secretary
Dominic Walton	Sergeant-At-Arms
Ron Villegas	Director of Retirees

### BRANCH 38 TRUSTEES

Clint Colie	Keith Hemmings
Richard O'Connell Jr.	Joseph Otero
Armando Pedreira	

### PART TIME AREA REPRESENTATIVES

Clint Colie	Michael Hedglin
Joe Otero	Armando Pedreira
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

October 5, 2022  
November 2, 2022  
December 7, 2022

### SPECIAL EVENTS

Charlie Connell Golf Outing  
October 10, 2022

Retiree Breakfast - North  
October 16, 2022

Retirement Training  
October 30, 2022

MDA Beefsteak  
November 5, 2022

Veterans Day  
November 11, 2022

Holiday Party  
December 10, 2022

**NJ Merged Branch 38  
Web Site**

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

# NALC Election - Vote!



**President**

*by Mike O'Neill*

This summer has presented the Branch and our membership with many highs and lows. The challenges were many, and the Branch 38 family suffered a great loss. I want to acknowledge the passing of our good friend and brother, Jim Eagen. Jim served the membership of Branch 38 for many years as our Director of Retired Members and Health Benefit Plan Representative. Jim assisted so many of our members with health benefit and retirement issues when they needed help the most. I had the pleasure of recently presenting Jim with his NALC lapel pin commemorating sixty-five years as a member of NALC. Jim was a dedicated unionist. We are grateful for his service and we will miss him greatly. Our prayers are with him and his family.

The Postal Service continues to be unable to address the severe staffing problem that exists throughout the NJ District and across the nation. Inadequate staffing caused largely by the Service's inability to retain new employees has resulted in constant contract violations regarding overtime and movement of CCA's. It has also placed an incredible burden on our already overworked members. I suspect the enormous number of hours carriers have been forced to work have caused many injuries and retirements which only compounds the problem. Until the Postal Service realizes that we need a fully career workforce that is paid adequately and treated humanely, the problem will continue. Hopefully this will be address in our next National Agreement negotiations beginning next February.

On a positive note, our Representatives in Washington finally came around to passing the Postal Reform Act. This Act repeals the mandate for the Postal Service to pre-fund retiree health benefits several decades in advance, making the financial future of the Service much more manageable. It also makes delivery of mail and packages six days a week the law of the land, providing job security to all letter carriers. This was a long fought battle, resulting in an incredible victory for letter carriers. I want to thank every member who contributes to the Letter Carrier Political Fund and who contacted their Representatives in support of this bill.

As noted in the cover story of this issue, the dedication and hard work of the members of NJ Merged Branch 38 resulted in many honors presented at the NALC National Convention in Chicago. Branch 38 stood out amongst all of the Branches throughout the country as leaders in raising funds in support of the Muscular Dystrophy Association in their search for a cure and in support of the many families that rely upon them for assistance. We were also honored for the support of our members for the Letter Carrier Political Fund and the NALC's legislative program. As further acknowledgment of the good work of our members, I was honored to be elected to the position of AFL-CIO Delegate. Thank you all for your support and dedication.

Another high point at the Convention was the election by consent of Bruce Didriksen as Region 15 National Business Agent. There in none more deserving of this honor than Bruce. His work in building Branch 38 into the best Branch in the NALC, and his tireless work representing members in all aspects of the job, especially workers compensation, is unparalleled in this organization and speaks for itself. I join all the members of Branch 38 in congratulating Bruce and pledge the continued support of the entire Branch during his time as NBA.

The NALC is recognized as one of the most democratically run labor unions in the nation. That tradition continues this year, and an election for several national officer positions will be conducted in the coming weeks. The Executive Board of Branch 38 asks the membership to join us in support of the Renfroe/Barner ticket. Most importantly, I want to emphasize the importance of your participation in this election. You have a right to have your voice heard, and it is important that you utilize that right. Let your leaders know that you are paying attention and expect them to continue to work in the best interests of our members. You can do that by voting in the coming election.

The election will be conducted by mail ballot in accordance with the NALC Constitution. Ballots will be mailed to all eligible members between September 26 and 30. To be eligible to vote, a person must be a regular member of NALC and in good standing as of June 1, 2022. Official election instructions will be included with all ballots mailed to eligible members. **Any active or retired member who does not receive a ballot by October 7 must notify me, so that I may contact the NALC Membership Department to request a duplicate, replacement ballot.** That request must be made by me no later than October 11. All ballots must be received by the election committee by October 21 to be counted.

In order to encourage participation in this election by the members of Branch 38, we will again be raffling off a large screen TV to those who vote. In order to be eligible, all you have to do is show your sealed ballot to your shop steward and/or Area Rep before putting it in the mail. Thanks you for your participation.

# Protect Your Safety & Your Route



## **Executive Vice President**

**by Dan Szucs**

Recently, the New Jersey District rolled out what they call a “Safety Gemba” (Gemba is a Japanese word for “actually there”). The instructions given to management were to do office and street safety “Gemba” and take pictures. Discuss a safety topic then go out on the road and observe the employees. Fill out and complete a PS Form 4584/4588/4589. Once on the road take pictures of the safety infraction as well. This was addressed by Branch 38, and management has agreed to follow the language of the ELM (Employee Labor Relations Manual) 667.21 Prohibition:

*During the course of activities related to postal employment, postal employees may not record, monitor, or otherwise intercept the oral or wire communications of any other person through the use of any electronic, mechanical, or other device, nor listen in on a telephone conversation, nor direct another to do so, unless all parties involved in the communication are made aware of and consent to such interception.*

Management must also abide by the M-39 Section 134.22:

*The manager is not to spy or use other covert techniques. Any employee infractions are to be handled in accordance with the section in the current National Agreement that deal with these problems.*

**In one office, management did take a video showing several LLV’s not properly stopping at a stop sign when leaving the postal parking lot.** Please keep in mind that the time it takes you to follow both state law and postal policy becomes part of your eight-hour day. When you park your vehicle, take the time to curb the wheels, put the emergency brake on, turn off the vehicle, take the keys with you and make sure that all doors are locked. That might take you only a minute or two, but it all adds up. If you were to follow at least those two rules and regulations during the day, you will avoid possible accidents and avoid having additional work added to your route. When you work safely and professionally, you have taken the right step in avoiding more work added to your already hard day.

**There are several manuals that you are required to follow that involve your safety;** EL-814 Employees Guide to Safety, EL-801 Supervisor’s Safety Handbook and the safety rules that are in the

M-41. One very important part of your safe day is your right under the contract to take your lunch and breaks. All letter carriers, including CCAs, receive an UNPAID half hour lunch break. The ELM, section 432.33 states, “Mealtime: Except in emergency situations or where service conditions preclude compliance, no employee may be required to work more than 6 continuous hours without a meal or rest period of at least 1/2 hour.” All letter carriers, including CCAs, receive two paid 10-minute rest breaks during an eight-hour workday. These breaks may not be combined with each other, and they may not be combined with your lunch break. There is no requirement to take one break before and one after your lunch. Under the new route adjustment process, you DO NOT receive credit for lunch or breaks if you work through them. That means that you will receive fifty minutes of additional work added to your route.

**Taking the time to follow these rules and regulations will help you avoid having more work added to an already hard day.** If you have any questions about the safety manuals or the new route adjustment process, please contact your shop steward, area representative or call the Branch office.

## ***Free 55” TCL Smart TV NALC Branch 38 Election Raffle***

Branch 38 will be raffling off a 55” TCL Smart TV. In order to be entered into the drawing all you need to do is complete your secret ballot in the upcoming NALC Officer Election and show the sealed envelope to your shop steward or Area Representative. Your name will be entered into the drawing for the TV at no cost to the member.

Branch 38 has a proud history of strong participation in all aspects of NALC activities, including elections. The Executive Board has unanimously voted to support the Renfroe/Barner ticket. Regardless of how you vote, we encourage everyone to utilize their right to be heard during this election. Thank you in advance for your participation.

# *NALC Disaster Relief Foundation*



**Treasurer**

**by Joseph Rutkoski**

The NALC Disaster Relief Foundation is a fund that was created by the NALC to offer monetary relieve and hands on assistance to union letter carriers that have been affected by natural disasters such as, earthquakes, tornadoes, hurricanes. When disasters occur, the Foundation will immediately assess the situation and react accordingly to aid our members. Members affected by natural disasters need only to reach out to their branch president, National Business Agent (NBA) or NALC Headquarters for assistance. Any NALC member who has experienced a hardship resulting from a natural disaster can apply for assistance.

The creation of the disaster relief foundation came from the 2018 national convention from branches expressing a desire to help their sisters and brothers by creating response teams, providing needed supplies, and to offering financial assistance to letter carriers. Prior to the creation of the foundation there was nothing in place to fill that need. As President Rolando put it “That’s why this foundation was created to reflect the will of the members and make it easy for them to help others in need quickly and effectively”

Relief grants are only considered for property damage sustained to a primary residence, vehicle, or personal property, by a hurricane, flood, tornado, wildfire, earthquake, severe storm, etc. The eligibility requirements are as follows:

1. Must be a NALC member as defined by the NALC Constitution: Article 2 Section 1(a)
2. Members do NOT have to wait for emergency relief or insurance claims to apply.
3. All members having been temporarily displaced from their primary residence “uninhabitable” MUST submit a signed, personal narrative detailing the specific reasons for the anticipated duration of the displacement.
4. Applications for grants from NALCDRF must be received no later than 120 days from the date that the natural disaster occurred unless the applicant can provide sufficient reason(s) why they were unable to complete and submit their application prior to this deadline. Requests for exceptions will be ruled on by the NALCDRF Directors on a case-by-case basis

The Disaster Relief foundation has become an invaluable lifeline for our sisters and brothers in need and is truly the perfect example of solidarity that has offered relief for many of our brothers and sisters in need throughout the entire country including Branch 38 members. More detailed information about the foundation can be found in the NALC Disaster Relief members guide which can be found on the NALC website.

Financial support for the foundation is provided by NALC, branch fundraising events, donations from members and donations from corporate sponsors. Anyone who would like to donate to the fund may send a check or money order to:

NALC Disaster Relief Foundation  
100 Indiana Ave. NW  
Washington, DC 20001-2144.

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

**Help Protect:  
Your Job  
Your Benefits  
The Postal Service**

**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.

# *Your Right to Representation*



**Director  
of  
City  
Delivery**

**by Mark McGrady**

The Branch has recently seen an increase in the number of letters of discipline being issued to letter carriers for various reasons. The problem is District wide, and we need to pursue an aggressive approach reminding our members of their Weingarten rights and enforcing them.

Federal labor law, in what is known as the Washington rule, gives each employee a right to union representation during any investigatory interview which he or she reasonably believes may lead to discipline (NLRB v. J. Weingarten, U.S. Supreme Court, 1975). The Weingarten rule does not apply to discussions or fitness for duty physical examinations. Discussions are not discipline and are not grievable.

#### **Article 17.4 of the JCAM provides:**

The Weingarten rule applies only when the meeting is an investigatory interview, when management is searching for facts and trying to determine the employee's guilt or decide whether or not to impose discipline. The rule does not apply when management calls in a carrier for the purpose of issuing disciplinary action (e.g. handing the carrier a letter of warning). An employee has Weingarten representation rights only where he or she reasonably believes that discipline could result from the investigatory interview. Whether or not an employee's belief is reasonable depends on the circumstances of each case. Some cases are obvious, such as when a supervisor asks an employee whether or not he/she discarded deliverable mail.

The steward cannot exercise Weingarten rights on the employee's behalf. And unlike Miranda rights, which apply in criminal matters, the employer is not required to inform the employee of the Weingarten right to representation. Employees also have the right under Weingarten to a pre-interview consultation with a steward. Federal Courts have extended this right to premeeting consultations to cover Inspection Service interrogations (U.S. Postal Service v. NLRB, D.C. Cir. 1992, M-01092).

In a Weingarten interview, the employee has the right to a steward's assistance, not just a silent presence. The employer would violate the employee's Weingarten rights if it refused to allow the representative to speak or tried to restrict the steward to the role of a passive observer. Although ELM Section 665.3 requires all postal employees to cooperate with postal investigations, the carrier still has the right under Weingarten to have a steward present before answering questions in this situation. The carrier may respond that he or she will answer questions once a steward is provided.

Every carrier has Weingarten Rights, so there is no reason for a carrier to be in an investigatory interview without union representation. Speak up and ask for your shop steward if management tells you to come to their office for an investigatory interview. The Shop Steward should be aware that you are not just a silent presence in an investigatory interview. Do not let management silence you in an investigatory interview. You may clear up any answers and questions presented in the investigatory interview. Know your rights and exercise them.

## *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. One of the coolest features is 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.

## *CCA Conversions to Career*

As a result of the new provisions in the National Agreement, many CCA's are being converted to career status. It is important that these carriers are aware that when they are converted, management is obligated to provide Career Conversion Training to each employee. That normally is conducted at District Headquarters. During that training, employees are informed of their newly acquired benefits, which include health insurance and Federal Employee Life Insurance. There are strict time frames in which the employee must enroll in these programs, or wait until the next open season. Anyone who is converted to career status should contact the Branch office, and we will make sure you are included in the next available Career Conversion Class. We want to make sure every one of our new career letter carriers receives all they are entitled to.

# *ECOMP - Register Now*



**Corresponding  
Secretary**

*by Christine Strasser*

**An injured letter carrier who suffers a traumatic or an occupational injury with the Postal Service is covered under the Federal Employees' Compensation Act (FECA).** When an injured letter carrier files a traumatic injury claim, management has ten days to send the CA-1 form to injury compensation located at the New Jersey District. Many times, management does not know how to complete the form or loses it and delays for the injured letter carrier begin. Delays can range from getting prescriptions, seeing an orthopedic doctor, approval of physical therapy, or processing of continuation of pay.

**At the end of 2019, all employees of the Postal Service were permitted to begin filing claims electronically.** A mandatory service talk was to be conducted in all installations to explain the Employees Compensation Operations and Management Portal (ECOMP), which is used to file an electronic claim. ECOMP is a "free web-based application hosted by OWCP that provides federal agencies with an electronic system for recording workplace injuries and illnesses, and processing claims under the Federal Employees' Compensation Act (FECA)."

**Why is ECOMP so important?** To avoid delays and safeguard your medical information from management. Registering with ECOMP allows an injured letter carrier to file a claim using a postal computer, a home computer, a tablet, or smart phone. While you are seeking medical treatment you could be completing the CA-1 from your smart phone. On ECOMP you can retrieve claim numbers, track the progress of the claim, upload documents, view claim examiners notes, and numerous other features. Another important reason to register with ECOMP is the "employee dashboard," which will list all prior cases you have filed under OWCP and their status.

**Branch 38 strives to provide the members with the most up-to date and relevant information.** One of our newest goals is to have every member register with ECOMP before you are injured. I know you may say, "I will never need to use that," or "I do not have time." Registering only takes a few minutes and it is FREE!

**To register and create an ECOMP account, open any web browser, type in ECOMP DOL and hit search.** The following link should appear: <https://www.ecomp.dol.gov/#/>. Click on the link and to go to the ECOMP register page. To set up an account you will need an email address that you can easily access. OWCP will send emails regarding notifications about the forms you filed. If you file a claim it is recommended to check your account regularly for any type of letter requesting more information.

**To register, you will need to enter your name, telephone number, and email address.** You will then be asked to enter your social security number. When completing any future forms, you will be asked for you social security number again. Be sure it is entered correctly. Next you will need to select your Government Organization, scroll to find "UNITED STATES POSTAL SERVICE." Select our state, "NJ." Pick your postal district, under select agency, which will be located at "21 Kilmer Road, Edison." A message will appear to let you know what forms you are able to complete via ECOMP. ECOMP will ask for your immediate supervisor's email address. You can get that from either management or your shop steward. Next, choose a password. The password must be a minimum of eight characters, including an upper-case letter, lower case letter, one number, and a special character. Save this password, in a safe location. It will be required every time you sign in to ECOMP. Next, choose three security questions and answers for your account. Save these questions and answers also in a safe location. Once all information is entered correctly, click "Create Account." You will receive an email address to confirm your account and complete the registration process. Click the link within the email. You will be directed to ECOMP, and a message will be displayed that your account has been created. Click "Ok." The registration process is complete. You can now sign in to ECOMP. Your "Employee Dashboard" will open, where you will be able to view claim numbers, if any exist.

**The above information may seem overwhelming. If you need assistance, I am available, along with your area representative, to assist you.** ECOMP is designed to avoid delays with processing forms and keeping your medical records private. I must advise you of the requirement to notify management of any injury immediately after it occurs! You must also provide management with the CA-17 duty status report after it is completed by your physician. Take a few minutes of time today to protect yourself for tomorrow in the event of a traumatic or occupational injury.

***The Branch 38 Facebook Page***

***"NJ Merged Branch 38"***

# Health Plan Open Season



***Full-Time  
Area Rep  
& HBP Rep***

**by Pete Bednarz**

Mark your calendars for this year's open season to enroll or change your health benefit plan for 2023; November 14-December 12, 2022. As of this writing, the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) has not announced the premiums of any of the health plans that participate in FEHB. However, just as in past years, it is almost guaranteed that most, if not all, of the health plans will have an increase in their premiums. Please pay close attention because some health insurance plans have dramatically increased their rates over the years compared to others.

One of the benefits you have as a union member is the choice to be enrolled in the NALC Health Plan. It is union-operated, union owned, and not-for-profit. While other health plans are designed to make a profit, the NALC health plan was formed over 60 years ago as a benefit for all NALC members.

All Branch 38 members, including retirees and newly converted regulars and PTFs, are strongly urged to compare the NALC Health Benefit Plan with all the other plans available. When you see the quality service, excellent coverage, and the affordable pricing of the NALC Plan, you will be assured that the plan best serves the needs of you and your family. The best way to make an educated decision is to go to the OPM website to compare your current plan to the NALC Plan. The OPM comparison tool will show the difference in the price of the premiums, copayments, deductibles, and catastrophic limits. Go to <http://www.opm.gov/healthcare-insurance/healthcare/plan-information/compare-plans>. The comparison tool will surprise you as to how much of a difference of overall savings you can have by switching to the NALC Health Plan.

Last year there were 2,320 Branch 38 members that had the NALC Health Plan. Of those, there were 1291 active letter carriers and 903 retirees. If you have a different health insurance plan, please talk to one of your letter carrier brothers and sisters who have our health plan. I'm sure they will tell you that they are very satisfied and happy with the NALC Health Plan. Over the past 3 years, there were over 400 Branch 38 members that switched from our competitors to join the NALC Health Benefit Plan. Many of them were able to save over \$100.00 dollars per paycheck or \$2,600.00 per year just in pre-

miums alone. Think about what you can do with those kind of savings.

The rates and codes for the NALC High Option Health Benefit Plan for 2022 were:

Self- \$98.28 (Code 321)  
Self Plus One-\$234.35 (Code 323)  
Family- \$202.02 (Code 322)

The 2022 monthly annuitant rates for our retired members were:

Self- \$212.94  
Self Plus One- \$507.76  
Family- \$437.71

NOTE: If there are only two of you, take the Family option instead of Self Plus One to save money.

The NALC partners with CIGNA to use their vast network in order to provide our members with access to over 2.6 million preferred physicians, and thousands of preferred hospitals and facilities all over the country. You can easily check to see if your current doctors are in the health plan by visiting the website ([www.nalchbp.org](http://www.nalchbp.org)) or by calling 877-220-6252.

A couple of new improvements over the last couple of years were the Telehealth and Telemental programs. These are virtual visits from home or wherever you are, with physicians, nurse practitioners, psychiatrists, or psychologists. These programs turned out to be very important when the country shut down due to the Covid 19 pandemic. Our members were able to make virtual visits by computer or handheld devices and did not have to leave their homes to see a doctor.

Current active letter carriers have four ways to enroll in the NALC Health Plan.

1. Use computer or smart phone and go to <https://liteblue.usps.gov>
2. The Blue Page (Internet) at work.
3. Employee Self-Service Kiosks located at some USPS facilities.
4. PostalEase by phone. Call (877-477-3273) and enter Option 1.

Annuitants and Retirees have three ways to enroll in the NALC Health Plan.

1. Calling Employee Express at 800-332-9798
2. Visit OPM's Open Season website at [retireefehb.opm.gov](http://retireefehb.opm.gov)
3. Submitting a Standard 2809 to your retirement office.

If you are a retiree and have Medicare as the primary payer and the NALC Health Plan High Option, charges for services and supplies are covered 100% between Medicare and the Plan. Why would you stay with another health plan that charges you hundreds of dollars more each month?

This Open Season, take the time to compare premiums, co-pays, deductibles, and catastrophic provisions. Then, choose the health insurance plan that is best for you and your family. It may be the smartest and most important economic decision you make in 2022.



# *NALC Disability Insurance*



**Recording  
Secretary**

*by Roy Jancio*

The NALC has recently launched another benefit for NALC members. The new benefit, Individual Disability Income, was introduced because Letter Carriers do not qualify for state disability, therefore, members only have sick leave and annual leave if they get hurt or sick off the job. Those carriers may exhaust all their sick leave and annual leave due to injury or illnesses over time, and then have no other source of income. Some carriers may have leave to use when they get hurt but rely on overtime to help pay their bills. If you are one of the people mentioned above this disability income insurance is for you.

**This is how Individual Disability Income policy works and what the qualifications are.** First you must be a NALC member in good standing, meaning every NALC member qualifies. When picking a policy there are three monthly payable amounts to choose from. They are \$650, \$1350, and \$2000 a month. These amounts are the amount you will be paid if you are out of work for illness or injury. Depending on your age and the payable monthly payment, the member will have a bi-weekly premium anywhere from \$11 to \$54 bi-weekly. Your bi-weekly premium will always stay the same from the day you sign up. The premium comes directly from the members

check. Whatever payable amount the member chooses will be paid to the member tax free if injured or sick.

**Premiums will be paid for any doctor ordered medical condition that causes a member to miss more than 14 days of work.** The policy will additionally cover them when out on Workman's Compensation at the same payable amounts.

**Filing a claim is easy. The member must complete one section of the form, the doctor another, and management another.** The policy reviewer from the plan will be looking for the first day the employee was out of work, and an approximate date the member will return to work, and possible preexisting injuries.

**There are some guidelines which may cause a member not to qualify for a claim because of a previous existing injury.** If you have a preexisting injury and it has been treated or cared for by a doctor within one year, that preexisting injury would not be covered under the policy. However, if you hurt your knee in 2019 and had treatment for only a couple of months, then signed up for this insurance and reinjured the same knee in 2022, the knee would then be covered.

**Any NALC member in good standing can join the policy, but they must obtain the policy before age 59.** The policy coverage will cover any member up to age 65.

**This policy was designed to help NALC members with all the issues above and many more.** The MBA also has many other products and services such as Life Insurance (Many options), Hospital Plus and MBA Retirement Savings Plans (Many options). If you have any questions about any of the products and services, the MBA has to offer, please contact Roy Jancio at 973-564-7244 (Ex. 24).

## *Membership Recognition*

The NALC provides lapel pins in recognition for membership of 25 years or more, and 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.



President O'Neill presents the NALC 60 Year Lapel Pin to Newark Retiree Walter Ivanko.

# Jim Eagen 1927-2022

by Al Ferranto & Bruce Didriksen

**His booming voice was unmistakable. His staunch advocacy** on behalf of the Letter Carriers he represented for more than half a century made him a beloved symbol of what Labor Unions are all about. When you put your faith in Jim Eagen to handle your problem, he wouldn't dream of letting you down and would work tirelessly to avoid doing so. Which is why his passing on July 13, 2022, leaves his "second family", NALC Branch 38, in mourning.

**A member of the NALC for 65 years, Jim Eagen began his** Union career as the Branch President of NALC Branch 2032 in Westwood, New Jersey, back in the days before collective bargaining. He received no salary as Branch President and held Branch meetings in his basement to conserve funds. Jim's wife, Ellen, was a clerk at the Hackensack Post Office, but postal salaries being what they were, Jim still had to work a second job to support his family. He found time, however, to serve his community as a volunteer fireman.

**In March of 1970, the first, and only, Postal Strike in the** nation's history was ignited by New York City's Branch 36 Letter Carriers, and quickly spread to New Jersey and other suburban areas around the country. Al Ferranto, a member of Branch 2032 at the time, and later a national officer in the NALC, remembers Jim Eagen's role as a leader:

*"Branch 2032 went on strike and was out for six days. It was then that Jim's leadership and courage were highlighted. He became a leader during the strike, not only for Branch 2032 but for Letter Carriers and Clerks who worked in the Pascack Valley Post Offices. Despite being served with an injunction and threatened with jail and loss of his job, Jim did not resign, nor did he go into hiding like some other leaders did. When times get tough, a person's mettle gets tested and thankfully Jim Eagen was our leader at the time of the great Post Office strike."*



Jim and Al Ferranto in the early days.



**A few years after the strike, NALC Branch 2032 merged with** Branch 991 (Ridgewood), and Jim continued to serve his Westwood constituency as Shop Steward. When Al Ferranto later became President of Branch 991, he approached Jim Eagen about taking on the role of Health Benefits Representative for the Branch. A member of the NALC Health Benefits Plan since its inception in 1960, Jim readily agreed and began a new career as the HBR for Branch 991, and later with Branch 38 (following a 1983 merger of the two Branches) that spanned more than 30 years. During his tenure as Health Benefit Representative, the membership of the Branch grew by 2000%, but Jim deftly handled the increased workload without losing the cheerful nature that endeared him to Plan members. His knowledge, personality and patience made him one of Branch 38's most popular figures and one of the foremost HBRs in the NALC.

**A veteran of the United States Navy, who served on the USS** Taconic during World War II, Jim was predeceased by his beloved wife, Ellen, and is survived by five children and their families, which include 14 grandchildren and seven great-grandchildren. To Jim, family was more important than anything else in his life.

**To all who knew him, memories of Jim Eagen will continue to** bring contentment and inspire them to selfless acts of service to others. May he rest in eternal peace after a life well lived.

**Save the Date**  
**Branch 38 Holiday Party**  
**December 10, 2022**  
 Call Mark McGrady 973-564-7244 (Ext.22)

## Charlie Connell Columbus Day Golf Outing

MONDAY, OCTOBER 10, 2022

BUNKER HILL GOLF COURSE - GRIGGSTOWN, NJ

FEE - \$110 per Golfer - Price Includes:  
Golf, Cart, Dinner, Beer, Soda, Hot Dogs & Prizes

To reserve a spot for your foursome, or to make a  
donation, call:

Mike O'Neill (973-564-7244 Ext. 18)

or

Christine Strasser (973-564-7244 Ext. 20)

or

Send a check with your golfers' names to:

NJ Merged Branch 38

374 Morris Ave.

Att: Chris Strasser

Springfield, NJ 07081

*All Proceeds Go To MDA*

## MDA FUND RAISERS

### NY Jets Ticket Raffle

Two Club Seats & Parking

Bills at Jets - Nov. 6, 2022

\$20.00 Per Chance

Contact Joe Otero

973-564-7244 (Ext.11)

### Beefsteak Dinner

### Tricky Tray for MDA

November 5, 2022

Lyndhurst, NJ American Legion Hall

Contact Armando Pedreira

973-564-7244 (Ext.19)

## Retiree Breakfast

On Sunday, October 16, 2022, at 9:00 AM, NJ Merged Branch 38 will be holding our annual Retiree Breakfast. The Breakfast will be held at the Chandelier Restaurant located at 340 Franklin Avenue, Belleville, NJ 07109. To reserve a spot, and to get directions, call Director of Retirees, Ron Villegas at 973-564-7244 (Ext. 21). All Branch 38 retirees are welcome to attend. There is no charge to retired members and guests.

**Invited guest speakers include NALC President Fred Rolando, NBA Larry Cirelli, RAA Bruce Didriksen, and NJSALC President Rich O'Connell.** All NJ Merged Branch 38 officers and staff will be in attendance as well. This is an excellent opportunity for retirees to come together to exchange old stories, renew old friendships, and hear the latest news from Washington affecting letter carriers and retirees.

**All of New Jersey's Congressional Representatives** have also been invited and, based on years past, some will be sure to attend. This is a critical time in our nation's history, and for the Postal Service as well. The Retiree Breakfast will be an excellent opportunity to hear first hand from our friends in Washington, find out where our country is headed, what they are doing to protect the interests of letter carriers and retirees, and what we need to do to get involved. Please join us.

## Retirement Seminar

Sunday, October 30, 2022

10:00 AM - 1:00 PM

WOODBIDGE ELKS LODGE #2116

665 RAHWAY AVENUE

WOODBIDGE, NJ 07095

**NJ Merged Branch 38 will be holding a retirement seminar** for those considering their option to retire during the next few years. Information relative to CSRS and FERS retirement plans will be addressed.

**We will be covering topics such as how to calculate your annuity and carrying health and life insurance into retirement.** We will discuss what information you will need to complete the application for retirement, and what you need to do to prepare for retirement.

**You will have a chance to ask questions and meet with** some of the Branch 38 officers. Spouses are also welcome.

Please let us know if you plan to attend by contacting Ron Villegas at 973-564-7244 (Ext. 21) or your Area Rep no later than October 21, so that we will be sure to have an adequate supply of training material and space available.

# 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.