

ACTIVIST

NALC

A NEWSLETTER FOR BRANCH LEADERS OF THE NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF LETTER CARRIERS
VOL. 20, NO. 2
July 2007

Leadership Academy Graduates Accelerate Union Activism



plication form, which is available on the front page of NALC's website, www.nalc.org.

"When I see more than 300 applications for just 30 slots in a leadership class," NALC President Bill Young remarked, "I know there are plenty of potential leaders among our talented membership. Don't let anybody tell you that younger people are not interested in the union—it's just not true."

(Continued on page 4)

Lead trainer Jim Williams records a breakout group's findings. Clockwise from foreground: Joseph Henschen, J. Price, Jennifer Montgomery, Kevin Card, Ken Groves, and Sonny Guadalupe—graduates from the 2005 Leadership class.

"It changed my whole outlook. It's given me a whole different perspective—the perspective to understand what I'm learning. It has given me the confidence to learn and do new jobs in the branch. I feel that I can do anything I'm asked to do."

That's how Mack Julion, member of Chicago Branch 11, describes his NALC Leadership Academy experience. Julion joined the second Academy class, arriving at Week 1 in January, 2006 and graduating in June.

Julion is one of 90 NALC members who have applied for admission

to the Leadership Academy, gained acceptance, and then worked hard for 5 months to earn diplomas. So far the union has conducted three complete rounds of Academy training, one each in 2005, 2006, and 2007. A fourth class begins in August, and two more are scheduled for 2008.

Thirty members participate in each class, and applications have far outnumbered the slots available. Applications are open this summer for next year's two classes, with a cutoff date of September 30. Members can print or download the ap-

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Subcontracting

Help NALC by providing information

NALC is counting on you to help compile a nationwide census of subcontracting activity. The National Office wants to know as much as it can about USPS' push to increase the amount of mail delivered by contract employees.

While Highway Contract Routes (HCR) have been around for a long time, the last five years have seen the Postal Service award ever-increasing amounts of mail delivery to Contract Delivery Service (CDS) personnel.

NALC needs details on exactly what USPS is doing with regard to subcontracting—along with where it is taking place. These facts are needed for both arbitration and legislative action. NALC activists are the union's best sources of information. You know what's going on in your area and at your station. That's why the union is asking for your help.

Branch presidents have already received a letter from NALC headquarters, asking them to coordinate their branch's information-gathering efforts. It is crucial that the data collected be accurate and up-to-date. We need established facts, not rumors, if we are to be successful on Capitol Hill and before an arbitrator.

To make collecting information as easy as possible, NALC has developed a form (see the next page). Make as many copies of the form as you need – complete one form for EACH contract route. We need to know about all subcontracting ac-

tivity in your branch. Do NOT combine information about more than one route on a single form. Fill out the form completely; all the information is important. Where dates are requested, please provide your best estimate if you don't know the exact day, month and year. If you're not sure how to answer any question on the form, talk to your branch president.

When you're finished filling out the forms, give them to the branch president (or his/her designee). The president or designee is responsible for collecting the forms, checking their accuracy, and eliminating any duplication. Then, he or she will send the forms to the following address:

NALC
Attn: Nancy Dysart/Library
100 Indiana Ave., NW
Washington, DC 20001-2144

Data from across the country will be compiled in a database in Washington, so that NALC's leaders will have the facts they need as they make their case against subcontracting.

Remember, this is an on-going process. We're prepared for a long struggle, if that's what it takes. Continue to pay attention to subcontracting activity in your area. Be sure to keep some blank copies of the form handy. And if you hear of another CDS route in the months ahead, collect the information, fill the form out, and pass it on. It will

take all of us working together to defeat this threat to our craft, our union and our livelihood.

Stewards

- Make copies of this form.
- Use one form for each route.
- Keep blank copies on hand for the future.
- Gather accurate information.
- Submit the forms without delay.

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William H. Young, President



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Important Steward Subcontracting Survey

Instructions

1. Make copies of this form.
2. Use one form for each route that is (or will be) delivered by contracted personnel—Contract Delivery Service (CDS) or Highway Contract Route (HCR).
3. As soon as possible, give the completed form to your branch president (or the president’s designee) who will, after collecting all the forms, mail them without delay to:
NALC, Attn: Nancy Dysart/Library, 100 Indiana Ave NW, Washington, DC 20001-2144.

Route Information

Route number: _____
 City/State: _____
 Station: _____
 Zip + 4 (on the route): _____

Is the route primarily for mail delivery?

<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
Fill out this entire form.	Describe the route’s primary duties _____ and approximate creation date _____. Then, skip down to “Your Information” at the bottom and fill that out.

Route Characteristics:

The customers are primarily:

- Residential
 Businesses

The area the route services is:

- Park and loop
 Central delivery
 NDCBU
 Curbside

If route had not been assigned to CDS, would the route likely have been designated city delivery?

- Yes No

Route Statistics

When was the route created? (Best estimate) _____

How many current deliveries? (Best estimate) _____

If more deliveries are expected to be added in the future, how many additional deliveries will be added to the current route? (Best estimate) _____

Contract Information

Has the contract for this route been awarded yet?

Yes
 If yes, what is the contract’s effective date? (Estimate if exact date is not known.)
 Date: _____

No
 If no, how is mail currently being delivered?

<input type="checkbox"/> By supervisor or management	<input type="checkbox"/> Patrons pick up mail at post office
<input type="checkbox"/> By city letter carriers	<input type="checkbox"/> No deliveries yet—under construction
<input type="checkbox"/> By rural letter carriers	<input type="checkbox"/> Other (explain): _____

Your Information

Your name _____ Your position _____ Your comments: _____
 Email _____ Phone _____
 NALC Branch # _____ Date _____

Leadership Academy

Continued from page 1

Some 350 members applied for the first class in 2005—strong evidence that members were enthusiastic about the most ambitious leadership training effort in NALC history. Top officers have reviewed each application carefully and selected 30 participants for each class—two members from each of the union’s 15 NBA regions.

Each trainee works closely with a **mentor**—his or her branch president or another activist who has agreed to advise and assist the student throughout the 5-month long learning process. Mentors play a



Tammia Sneed, Paul Barner and David Grosskopf, 2007

key role in that process, assisting trainees with projects they complete between classes, and providing them with opportunities for greater activism in the union.

A tough, comprehensive curriculum

Work ethic matters a great deal,” says Jim Williams, retired NALC Executive Vice President and lead Academy trainer. “To succeed, Leadership Academy trainees have to make a serious commitment to work hard throughout the

learning process.” Jim Korolowicz, retired Assistant Secretary-Treasurer, also serves as a main Academy instructor. He agrees, telling class members that “getting the job done is a top trait of effective leaders.”

Williams and Ralph Goldstein, NALC’s Director of Education, designed the Academy curriculum to be a comprehensive “boot camp” introducing local activists to a broad range of leadership fundamentals. The curriculum provides an introduction to every major skill and area of knowledge that a union leader needs—more than 65 different topics in all. “Everything I’ve learned, I’m applying in some fashion,” says Horace Lewis, a 2007 graduate and a member of southern California’s Branch 1100.

The curriculum is also designed to be taught directly by national resident officers and national staff. Participants gain a unique perspective as a result. Coby Jones, Seattle Branch 79 member and 2006 graduate, commented, “The Academy covered a lot of areas I was unaware of, or of which I had only passing knowledge. My picture of the union had been focused pretty much on the grievance-arbitration process.” Jones said the Academy gave him “the view from 20,000 feet, an awareness of the larger economic issues facing the Post Office.”

Active learning

Jim Williams emphasizes the progressive teaching techniques that all Academy instructors use in the classroom. “We have required all the instructors to base their teaching

methods on the ‘active learning’ concept,” Williams explains. “That means learners are encouraged to discuss issues, solve problems, write papers, complete projects, and collaborate with fellow students in their learning.”

“We’re not lecturing all day, trying to stuff facts into people’s brains,” Ralph Goldstein elaborates.



*John Trujillo
2007 graduate*

“That kind of teaching is not just boring—it’s also ineffective. People learn best when they participate in their own learning, and when they integrate new knowledge and skills with their own experience.”

Trainees put their learning to work immediately in projects which they complete in their home branches. During Week 1 of classroom training, participants plan their projects and obtain their mentors’ and instructors’ approval. The projects must relate to a topic addressed in that week’s training. For instance, participants learn and practice training techniques during Week 1, and participants often choose projects involving training sessions in their branches.

After the class trainees return home and work with mentors to complete their projects during the two months between classes. Each participant composes a written project report, turned in before the next week of training. As part of the Writing Skills segment, NALC staff editors mark up the reports for grammar, clarity, organization, etc.,

to help participants improve their writing. At Week 2 of training, participants plan a second project, and repeat the process during the break before Week 3.

The projects have varied widely. Some participants have researched and written about the history of their branches. Others have taught classes on topics they learned at the Academy. Still others have written branch newsletter articles, run charity events, or recruited e-Activists or COLCPE contributors. All participants have put their Academy learning to work for the union's benefit.

Although the Academy curriculum is varied, it is neither light nor easy. During classroom sessions participants learn all day; then they attend night sessions during most evenings. To complete projects at home, participants must juggle Academy work along with the demands of carrying the mail, their regular union work, and family responsibilities.

Tina Richard, president of Western Massachusetts Branch 46 and 2006 Academy graduate, called the classes "so diverse, and really intense." She adds, "You couldn't pay for that kind of experience. I recommend it to everybody."

Keeping up-to-date

NALC conducts the week-long Academy classes at the National Labor College, which is supported by the AFL-CIO and affiliated unions. Formerly the George Meany Center for Labor Studies, the facility has transformed itself into a full-fledged, accredited college. NALC's classes are conducted in the Kirkland Center, a building completed last year.

"The facility is first-class," says Executive Vice President Fred Ro-

lando. "It has excellent classroom and breakout space, built-in projectors and screens, and wired and wireless Internet in every class and residence hall. It's nothing like the Meany Center facility where I attended NALC's arbitration training more than a decade ago."

Academy instructors encourage students to explore the digital resources available to them. During Week 2, participants head to the computer lab after Monday's dinner, to complete an Internet Treasure Hunt. The exercise is an eye-opener for those who have not spent significant time surfing the web.

"Online research skills are essential in the 21st century," says Rolando. "Every leader needs to know how to find the answers." Leadership Academy students receive copies of NALC's disc-based digital publications—the *Contract CD*, the *Arbitration DVDs*, the *Route Inspection Kit*, and the *Retirement Manual CD*. They also communicate with instructors and among themselves online.

A powerful bond

Participants gain something else, too, in Leadership Academy training—lasting bonds with the union and with fellow trainees. "It's just great the way the classes work," says Tina Richard. "The first week everybody is new and nervous. By the second week we're good friends, and by Week 3 we're like family."



Learning newsletter production are (left to right): Ken Groves, Chris Wittenburg, Jeff Kranz, Rich Wilson, Joe Henschen, Tony Hutson.

Many graduates have stayed in touch long after classes have ended. The 2005 and 2006 classes got together at the Las Vegas convention last year, and in each of those classes a tech-savvy graduate has set up an online forum where fellow class members keep in touch.

"It's not in the curriculum," says Jim Williams, "but the bonds between people are powerful glue binding the union together. At the Leadership Academy the shared experience has built friendships that span the country and the union."



Reshell Johnson
2005 graduate

Rolando adds, "Training is also an excellent recruiting tool. Training invests in great people—people who are hungry to learn. When we offer good training, those people often return the favor by committing themselves to long careers with NALC."

(Continued on page 6)

Leadership Academy

Continued from page 5

What's up with graduates

The Leadership Academy graduates are as varied as the union. There are branch presidents, steward, editors, legislative activists, MDA coordinators, and more, some with just a few years in NALC and others with established union careers.

“Our graduates include of lot of great people, and we expect many of them to help lead NALC in the next generation,” said Rolando. “However,” he points out, “the Leadership Academy does not give anybody a right to advance in the union. Like everybody else, the graduates have to earn their way.”

Here are some brief notes about a few of the Leadership Academy graduates:

Dan Szucs Branch 38, 2006

Dan Szucs is a letter carrier living in Edison, New Jersey, a busy union activist, and a long-time youth sports coach. He serves his branch as a station steward, EAP coordinator, and District Coordinator for Customer Connect.

Recently Szucs was invited to promote Customer Connect at the next level, doing hands-on sales with contacts developed by letter carriers. He and a partner from another branch make appointments with business owners to promote USPS services. They bring packets of information, answer questions, and show customers how to sign into USPS.com and use credit cards to pay for services online. So far the local Customer Connect program has generated more than \$800,000 in new postal business.

The 2006 Academy graduate had been managing two youth baseball teams, but had to cut back a bit on coaching recently. He still has plenty to keep him busy—union activities, raising two teenage sons, the high school football parents’ association, and youth baseball, where he continues to serve as a base coach. “I still have fun,” says Szucs.

Julie Todich Branch 3932, 2006

“If offered the chance I would want to do again,” says Julie Todich, who graduated from the Leadership Academy in June 2006. “It was a remarkable opportunity,” she said, to learn and “to meet a lot of great people in the union.”

Todich is president of a nine-member branch in Vernal, a town nestled in the northeast corner of Utah. Since graduating she has gotten even busier with union activities. She joined fellow 2005 graduate Kevin Card and others to help conduct a Teaching Techniques workshop at a regional training session. Todich has been appointed Utah District Organizer for Region 2’s organizing program, No Carrier Left Behind. She also serves as Secretary in the Utah State Association.

Kyle Inosencio Branch 56, 2005

Kyle Inosencio’s son Austin, his first child, was born just days after he completed Week 3 of Academy training in December, 2005. So Kyle’s been busy at home, in addition to his letter carrier and NALC jobs. Still, he has found time to create and administer a website where he and classmates can keep in touch online.

Inosencio serves as Treasurer of the Grand Rapids, Michigan



Kyle Inosencio

branch, and also has been handling grievances and helping with route adjustment training. His national business agent, Pat Carroll, is planning to ask Inosencio and other K.I.M. region Academy graduates to help conduct training at an upcoming regional gathering.

Inosencio thinks the Leadership Academy is a great way to help recruit the next generation of union leaders. “Anything we can do to attract the younger people is a good thing,” he says. “Good training, using good teaching techniques, helps to get people involved.”

Horace Lewis Branch 1100, 2007

“Man, there is NOTHING like delivering mail in Laguna Beach,” says Horace Lewis of Branch 1100. “Most of the people here are really down to earth. It’s a laid-back city.” Lewis, who completed the Academy in June 2007, is enjoying his job as he also ramps up his union activities.

Lewis has been working with others in his branch to develop training, helping to add segments from the Leadership Academy to Branch 1100’s own training pro-

grams. "Branch 1100 has been doing its own leadership classes for some time," he explains. (Charlie Miller, Branch 1100 President, served on a task force of local leaders advising the national union on the Academy's development.)



Horace Lewis working with flip chart

Lewis has also gotten more involved in COLCPE, and in helping to develop new activists and future leaders in his branch. "No, I am not getting a rest," he says.

Cliff Davidson Branch 382, 2007

"I look at the big picture a lot more," says Cliff Davidson of his Leadership Academy experience. "I see what the National's looking at, and I look differently at dispute resolution." Davidson says he tries to bring that larger perspective back home, to help convince fellow carriers to get more involved in legislation.

Davidson, resident of Hillsborough, North Carolina and president of his 400-member branch, completed Academy training in June, 2007. His schedule has filled up

quickly. He was just sworn in as president of his state association, and he has 4 arbitration hearings scheduled over the next 2 months. His NBA, Judy Willoughby, has asked Davidson and fellow 2007 Academy graduate Paul Barner (Branch 4862, Roswell, Georgia) to teach a class about the new 3-day COP waiting period.

Davidson, who has children ages 2½, 7, and 9, isn't complaining. "There are good, experienced people in the state association helping me with the transition," he says. "And my wife supports me 100 percent. She's a letter carrier and she helps me in my union work."

Carly Hook Branch 1427, 2007

"Although my union career has not been that long," says Carly Hook, the Leadership Academy was "my best union experience so far." Though her career may be short, Hook's resume as an activist is growing lengthy. Vice-President of the Santa Clara, California branch, she has advocated in a few arbitration hearings, taught at monthly steward trainings, and handled grievances in her branch. Hook attended the first 2007 Leadership Academy class, which graduated in June.



Carly Hook

After graduation Hook has continued to conduct trainings in her branch, sometimes using parts of the Academy curriculum to enrich the monthly sessions with stewards. "We call it Leadership Development training," Hook explains. "There are important things that need to be taught and need to be learned, such as how to run a meeting. So far the response has been good."

Manny Peralta, Hook's NBA, recently invited her to help conduct a mock arbitration at a regional training session. She will also attend NALC's arbitration advocacy training in August.

Other academy graduates quoted above

Coby Jones, Seattle Branch 79, 2006, has been handling Formal A grievances nearly full-time, and serves as a back-up member of Seattle's Step B team. He has also been working as a Region 2 arbitration advocate, has taught classes at state and regional training, and became a branch trustee in January.

For **Tina Richard**, Western Massachusetts Branch 46, 2005, the timing was just right. Shortly after she graduated from the Academy in December 2005, her long-time branch president and mentor Jon Weissman retired and she was elected unopposed to the full-time position.

Mack Julion, Chicago Branch 11, 2006, is busier than ever in his branch. He continues as a station steward, a branch vice-president has been helping him learn about route inspections, and he has taught classes on Article 8 to other shop stewards. Julion is also continuing to take night courses, working toward his college degree.

Surf's Up—Labor and the Internet

People assume that everything's on-line these days.

While that's definitely an exaggeration, letter carriers and labor activists can certainly find many useful things on the internet. There's a lot of good stuff out there, intermixed with lies, tall tales, rumors, gossip, slander, innuendo and inaccuracies. The following websites won't steer you wrong, and hopefully will help NALC activists as they carry out their vital work for the union.

NALC

All NALC activists should already know about their union's own site (<http://nalc.org>). It contains everything from breaking news to union history. The Contract Administration Unit (CAU) is just one department that has its own page within the site, making resources such as recent national level settlements and awards, the JCAM, and USPS Handbooks easily available to everyone.

A branch can request a bylaw change online or get the form for reporting group contributions to COLCPE. The NALC Constitution, articles from recent issues of the *Postal Record*, and the current pay schedule are some of the other items of interest available via your computer from the NALC national site. And remember, many NALC branches have their own sites, if you are looking for more local NALC information.

We won't discuss the USPS site here; presumably letter carriers already know all about it. But not

everyone may be familiar with other federal government websites, and the valuable information they provide.

Department of Labor

Let's start with the Department of Labor (DOL). It's a huge site (<http://www.dol.gov/>), and not always easy to maneuver around. Probably the best way to explore what's available is to click on "Search DOL / A to Z Index" in the upper right corner of the DOL home page. Then you can either scroll down the list of topics, or use the search box provided. Because the DOL site is so rich in resources, you may have to "drill down" several layers to find the exact item you need.

Branch officers who have had to file financial disclosure forms such as the LM-2 are probably already familiar with the Office of Labor-Management Standards (OLM) section of the site (http://www.dol.gov/esa/olms_org.htm).

But there's much more available. For example, those who want additional information on the Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA), can find everything from the actual law, to copies of FMLA forms at <http://www.dol.gov/esa/whd/fmla/index.htm>. Or go to the Office of Workers' Compensation Programs (OWCP). In its portion of the DOL site (http://www.dol.gov/esa/owcp_org.htm), you can find all the forms needed to file a claim, along with other information about the program, including the OWCP Medical Fee Schedule.

Statistics

Want to know how letter carrier wages compare to other occupations? Another division of DOL, the Bureau of Labor Statistics (<http://www.bls.gov>), provides data on wages and benefits, along with inflation, unemployment and workplace injuries. And if you need any more data, start with the *Statistical Abstract* on the Census Bureau website (<http://www.census.gov/compendia/statab/>). From the federal budget to population to prices to social security, if you need a number, you can probably find it here.

Federal government gateway

Every government agency has a website, so it's not possible to cover them all here. For anyone who isn't sure exactly where to look for government information, start with USA.gov. This is the portal, or gateway, to all federal government websites. It can point you in the right direction. Information can be accessed by general topic, such as, the workplace, labor or health care; or by audience, such as federal employees or senior citizens.

Legislation

Although postal reform legislation has finally been passed, Congress continues to be vitally important for the NALC and its members. Thomas (<http://thomas.loc.gov/>) is the single most useful govern-

ment website for anyone who wants to keep up with what is going on in the House or the Senate. It is named for Thomas Jefferson, the third president and founder of the Library of Congress, which maintains the site.

Right now, NALC activists are concerned with the legislative battle to ban contract mail delivery. On Thomas, you can track the status of House Resolution 282, “Expressing the sense of the House of Representatives that the United States Postal Service should discontinue the practice of contracting out mail delivery services.” You can also see what bills your representative or senator has introduced, access the *Congressional Record* to keep up with what happened in the House or the Senate, or look up the text of legislation such as the Postal Accountability and Enhancement Act.

Politics

Political news and views are all over the web. But be careful—there are many political websites which merely air partisan opinions—the more extreme the better—rather than transmit accurate information. As we get closer to the November 2008 presidential election, consider these sites to help you monitor political developments. The CNN Political Ticker (<http://politicalticker.blogs.cnn.com/>) is a reliable source for the latest political news.

If you check out the Federal Election Commission (FEC) website (<http://www.fec.gov/>), you can find out who’s been contributing to your Senator or Representative, and keep track of PAC activities. The site has a Presidential Campaign Finance Map which makes it easy

to track contributions to all announced candidates.

Next year’s primary schedule continues to change, as states try to maximize their importance in the nominating process. Keep up with the latest schedule by going to the “Calendar of 2008 State Primaries/Caucuses” maintained by the National Association of Secretaries of State (<http://www.nass.org/>). And when we finally get around to voting in November 2008, most major newspapers, as well as such outlets as CNN, will of course report the results on their websites. But just remember, each state is responsible for compiling the OFFICIAL results – there is no federal government agency which collects voting statistics. So if you want to know the exact numbers from Maryland, for example, you will have to go the Maryland State Board of Elections’ website.

Labor

One of the great things about the internet is that it makes available items which might not show up in your local newspaper or on the nightly news. Visit any of the following sites to find out what’s going on in the labor movement and at the workplace.

LaborNet’s LabourStart (<http://www.labourstart.org/usa/>) provides links to union-related news items from around the United States. (LaborNet also provides a comparable service for international news.)

The AFL-CIO Now Newsblog (http://blog.aflcio.org/?page_id=72) has a similar “daily clips” feature. The *Federal Times*, as its name suggests, covers the federal government. Its website (<http://www.federaltimes.com/>) includes a

“Postal Report” section which covers the Postal Service. The newspaper also tracks other items of interest to any federal employee, such as the Thrift Savings Plan or the Federal Employees Health Benefit Plan. For more postal news, you can go to PostalNews.com, which provides daily links to USPS-related news items from across the country; it also maintains an extensive news archive.

The internet has made it much easier to check out other collective bargaining agreements. Want to know what the UPS contract looks like? Go to the Collective Bargaining Agreements File maintained by the Bureau of Labor Statistics (<http://www.bls.gov/cba/cbaccess.htm>).

The Office of Personnel Management maintains a similar file for non-postal federal collective bargaining agreements (<http://www.opm.gov/lmr/lairs.asp>).

Another obvious source for contract language is the relevant union’s own website—like the NALC, many unions make their most important contracts available online.

And finally, the AFL-CIO site (<http://www.aflcio.org/>) provides much more than the news clips mentioned above. It’s a good place to get a sense of what’s happening in the labor movement at large. Among other things, the website documents the advantages of belonging to a union, and also provides background information on such subjects as health care, education and retirement. For issues of importance to all workers, union and non-union alike, this is the place to start.

Lights! Camera! Action!

Labor in the Movies . . . and on Video . . . and on the Internet

Unions all too often communicate with their members primarily through the written word. NALC, for example, relies on its magazine, the *Postal Record*, newsletters like the *Activist*, documents posted on its web site, and notices sent via e-mail.

But writing is not the only way to disseminate ideas. Media that are primarily visual, like films or videotapes, can also effectively—sometimes more effectively than writing—communicate ideas. For unions, movies provide an excellent way to enliven a branch meeting, educate your members in a training session, and spark discussion of where workers and unions fit in today's economy.

But where can you find a good movie, one centering around issues of importance to union members? When you ask someone to name a movie dealing with labor, Sally Fields' *Norma Rae* is the first—and often the only—title that comes up. That 1979 film about the heroine's efforts to organize her textile mill briefly brought the issue of labor representation and workers' rights to the attention of Americans who might not otherwise have been concerned with unions. Hollywood's interest in labor then seemingly disappeared.

But even today, in this era of *Shrek*, *Harry Potter* and *Pirates of the Caribbean*, there are still movies being made that deal with serious issues of importance to working men and women. Movies don't have to be serious documentaries to consider important questions. Does

anyone remember that Doris Day plays a union rep in the 1957 classic *The Pajama Game*? You could use that movie to generate discussion about the image of a union representative, and how it has changed over the years.

Admittedly, not everyone likes classic movies and Doris Day. So here are eight more contemporary films addressing issues crucial to American union members. Some cover historical events, such as the

Movies provide an excellent way to enliven a branch meeting and educate your members.

formation of the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters. Others deal with very contemporary topics, like Wal-Mart or working for a fast food chain. Some are feature-length; others are short.

All of these suggested movies could easily be made the centerpiece of a debate on labor's role in our society today. Watching one or more of them will undoubtedly suggest other topics to discuss, such as how changes in the economy are

affecting American workers, the challenges of organizing a union past and present, or what constitutes a good job in today's society.

All the titles listed below are easily available, either for purchase at a reasonable price, or by borrowing through a company such as Netflix or Blockbuster. The price on Amazon is listed to give you an idea of their cost, although you may be able to find them even cheaper elsewhere. Netflix availability is also noted. One video is actually posted on the Internet. Depending on where you live, some might also be available for borrowing through the public library.

American Dream

(\$12.99 or Netflix; 1992, 98 min.). Sound familiar? Company makes huge profits, while demanding wage cuts from its employees. Unlike many companies, where the employees grudgingly make concessions, the workers at the Hormel plant in Austin, MN responded by going on strike. The film won an Academy Award for best documentary.

Bread and Roses

(\$12.99 or Netflix; 2000, 110 min.). Immigrant workers cleaning corporate high-rises in Los Angeles team up with SEIU's "Justice for Janitors" campaign to fight dreadful working conditions and unfair labor practices. The employees try to garner public support for organizing the union, while management schemes

to divide and conquer its workers. Nominated for an award at the Cannes Film Festival.

Eyes on the Fries

(\$30 from Progressive Films, also available on Google Video (<http://video.google.com>); 2004, 21 min.). On coming of age—and into the workforce—in the era of “McJobs,” when good jobs in manufacturing or high tech are hard to find. Working hard and staying in school doesn’t help your financial future if the only job available is at minimum wage.

Fired

(\$17.99 or Netflix; 2006, 71 min.). Whatever you call it—being let go, downsized, laid off—it’s no fun. Stories of the many ways people can lose their jobs—a threat to all of us in this era of contracting-out.

Food Fight

(\$19.99 from PBS; 2006, 30 min.). A report on the decade long battle to unionize the world’s largest pork processing plant—Smithfield Packing in North Carolina. Will the UFCW be able to help the plant’s employees, who work in appalling conditions for low wages?

Matewan

(\$12.99 or Netflix; 1987, 130 min.). When the miners in a “company town” in West Virginia try to form a union, the owners cut their wages and bring in replacement workers. Not surprisingly, violence erupts. James Earl Jones stars.

10,000 Black Men Named George

(\$12.99 or Netflix; 2002, 112 min.). All porters for the Pullman Palace Car Company were called “George,” after owner George Pullman. The story of how these workers came together under the leadership of A. Philip Randolph to form the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters, the first American union run by African-Americans.

Wal-Mart: The High Cost of Low Price

(\$9.99 or Netflix; 2005, 95 min.). A dramatic demonstration of exactly how the behemoth retailer affects its workers, its suppliers, our communities and our economy. After watching this, you’ll understand the passionate opposition the company arouses.

* * *

The films listed here are just the beginning. For a more extensive list, check out the University of California at Berkeley’s videography, “Labor and Labor History” (<http://www.lib.berkeley.edu/MRC/LaborVid.html>).

And don’t forget the Internet. Anyone with a video camera these days can be a director, and some union activists are making videos to spread the union message. In an effort to counteract anti-union videos that unfortunately are all over the net these days, UnionOne has been posting pro-union videos on the popular YouTube web site (<http://www.youtube.com/unionone>). Check out what’s available. Copy one or more to a disk,

and show them at a branch meeting. They’re all short and sweet, and a good way to remind branch members where unions stand and why they are important to workers and their families.

Good films and videotapes are everywhere, once you start to look. Adding them to your meeting or training session is an easy way to vary your routine, add interest, and hopefully, get members more involved as we fight to protect the rights of letter carriers.



Films are a good way to spark discussion of where workers and unions fit in today’s economy.



Ordering information

Progressive Films
(www.progressivefilms.org) or
2124 Kittredge St., PMB 49
Berkeley, CA 94704
Phone: 510-644-2466.

PBS
(<http://www.shoppbs.org>) or
PBS Home Video
PO Box 609
Melbourne, FL 32902-0609
Fax: 1-866-274-9043.

EAP—The Steward's Role

Nearly every day, stewards find themselves involved in interactions with their fellow carriers on the workroom floor. Much of this time is spent filing grievances or otherwise enforcing the national agreement. However, in many cases, stewards' interactions with co-workers relate to problems or stresses that the employee is experiencing. These problems may be work related or they may involve personal or family issues.

As a result of their position, stewards are often viewed as leaders in the workplace. It is therefore natural for many employees to seek out a steward with whom they can discuss their personal or emotional problems.

A steward can also end up dealing with an employee's personal issues once they start to affect his or her work. For example, an employee's difficulty in handling grief following the death of a parent may result in attendance issues and attendance-related discipline. It is practically inevitable that stewards filing grievances on such disciplines will find themselves discussing, with the employee, the personal problems that triggered the attendance discipline.

One place that employees can turn to for help in coping with life's problems is the Employee Assistance Program (EAP). This is a benefit that is available to Postal Service employees, although some of them may not even be aware of it. In those cases, the steward can help the employee by providing basic information and also by directing him or her to EAP.

The steward also has another role with regard to EAP. That is, there are employee rights that have an EAP connection. These are rights that must be enforced. Examples may include the contents of an employee's personnel file and the right to privacy. Stewards must be aware of the employee's rights so that they will be able to enforce them.

This article will do two things. First, it will provide the steward with basic information on EAP so that he or she will be able to speak to employees on the subject when necessary. The second is to inform stewards about employees' rights associated with EAP for contract enforcement.

Employee Benefits

As union activists know, the steward's role requires knowledge about more than just the national agreement. To increase effectiveness, a steward broadens his or her knowledge of the law, legislation affecting working men and women, workers' compensation and so on. Having an understanding of EAP is another way that a steward can more effectively serve or represent his or her fellow employees. If an employee asked you, as the steward, what benefits are available under EAP, would you know how to answer?

A common misperception about EAP is that it is only for assistance with drug or alcohol problems. In fact, that is only one small part of what EAP does. The program provides counseling for employees and

their immediate families for a wide variety of issues, including:

- Family/relationship problems
- Problems in the workplace
- Health and behavioral issues
- Personal/emotional difficulties
- Financial or legal issues

EAP not only provides initial assessments for people with these types of issues, but also provides short-term counseling, as well. If a particular issue indicates long-term treatment, EAP will offer a referral for continued sessions using the employee's health plan.

To make EAP readily accessible, there is a toll-free number which employees can use 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. (See box below) For employees who know about the toll-free number, there is often another misperception—that calling the number will result in reaching voice mail or reaching some other type of recording. However, through the toll-free call, an employee or family member can actually get access to a licensed professional counselor. Through that phone call, an individual may be referred to an EAP counselor for face-to-face sessions, a financial

EAP Access

**Phone: 1-800-EAP-4-YOU
(1-800-327-4968)**

TTY: 1-877-492-7341

Internet: www.EAP4YOU.com

consultant, a legal consultant, or other community resources.

The fact that EAP provides free access to counselors for financial or legal problems is largely unknown to most people. Financial counselors can assist with normal everyday questions. For example, an individual can receive assistance with questions such as whether it is better to lease or buy a car, deciding which credit card to pay off first, family budgeting, or determining how much is needed to save for a comfortable retirement.

Stewards should be aware of another benefit—the fact that the employee's first visit to EAP is on the clock. An employee will be paid as long as he or she authorizes the EAP provider to confirm with management that fact that he or she did attend an EAP session. Management will receive no other information from EAP other than a confirmation of attendance. EAP counselors are bound by strict rules of confidentiality.

Employees sometimes express concern that management will learn about whatever is said during a counseling session. However, counselors are not Postal Service employees. They work for Magellan—an independent health service provider. Not only that, but privacy is always protected by strict federal and state confidentiality laws and regulations, as well as the professional ethics standards followed by the counselors. Information shared with EAP may not be released to anyone without the individual's prior written consent, except as required by law (e.g., when a person's emotional condition is a threat to him or herself or others, or there is a suspected abuse of a minor child, and in some states, spousal or elder abuse).

Enforcing employee rights

Armed with an understanding of employee rights related to EAP, a steward is equipped to protect these fundamental rights. The law and the national agreement form the basis for those rights. Section 870 of the Employee and Labor Relations Manual (ELM) covers EAP and is incorporated into the national agreement through Article 19.

Right to the first visit on the clock:

ELM Section 871.35 Scheduling—An employee's first visit to EAP is on the clock, whether the visit is initiated by management, the union representative, or the employee, unless the employee prefers to visit the EAP unit on his or her own time. Subsequent consultations are on the employee's own time. If a reasonable period of time has elapsed since a management referral or a previously disclosed self-referral, the manager or supervisor may, at his or her discretion, approve an additional on-the-clock session. To receive pay for an on-the-clock session, the employee must authorize the EAP provider to disclose to management the employee's attendance.

Right to protection from mandatory referrals:

Employees who have been around for a while may remember the days when a supervisor could issue a mandatory EAP referral to

an employee. In such cases, the employee had no choice but to go grudgingly to an EAP session against his or her own will—solely at the supervisor's discretion. The rules changed in 1999 and this is no longer permissible. Prior to 1999, the ELM language stated, "Management has the authority to require the employee to attend an initial EAP interview." (ELM 13, June 1998, Section 872.42)

It is hard to picture how forcing an employee to go to any sort of counseling session would produce positive results. The ELM provisions changed in 1999, thus allowing EAP to be what it was meant to be—an employee benefit, not a punishment issued by an angry supervisor. The current language states:

ELM Section 872.221 If a supervisor or manager observes the characteristics listed in 872.21, or has some other reason to believe that the EAP could provide needed assistance to an employee, he or she may refer the employee to the EAP. . . The employee has the option to refuse the referral, and the employee cannot be disciplined for noncompliance with the referral.

The only exception to this is if attendance is required as part of an agreement, as described in ELM Section 872.221:

Exception: In instances when there is a Last Chance Agreement, or when the employee has signed a settlement agreement requiring EAP participation, the employee can be disciplined for noncompliance with the terms of the agreement.

(Continued on page 14)

EAP—The Steward's Role

Continued from page 13

Right to privacy:

The Postal Service is required to handle certain information in accordance with the Privacy Act. Information related to an individual's participation in EAP must be held in strict confidence. Stewards should know that, if a member's privacy related to EAP is violated, this would be a sound basis for filing a grievance.

There are a number of ways this could happen. One example of a violation of the Privacy Act would be a supervisor who spreads information on the workroom floor about an employee's attendance in an EAP session. However, another lesser known violation occurs when management retains a copy of a written EAP referral in an employee's Official Personnel Folder (OPF). The steward should request that the record be removed, and grieve the situation if it is not.

ELM Section 871.33

Confidentiality—Inquiries regarding participation in EAP counseling are confidential, pursuant to the provisions of 874.4. EAP records may not be placed in an employee's official personnel file (OPF).

Referring a fellow employee

As described above, part of the steward's role with regard to EAP is enforcing the contract. However, when it comes to EAP, the steward's role can also be one of confidant or advisor. Employees may want to confide in their stewards about

problems they are struggling with. The steward may quickly realize that the employee would benefit from EAP, but not know how to make a referral.

For instance, the steward might be concerned that an employee would react negatively to the steward's suggestion of EAP. The potential for this is even greater where the employee does not approach the steward for help, but instead simply seems to need assistance in the steward's estimation. In cases like this, a steward's hesitancy to bring up the subject of EAP is certainly understandable. There's a chance that the steward may be met with resistance, defensiveness, or hostility. This type of reaction can come from the fact that some people may feel uneasy or embarrassed about seeing a counselor for personal problems.

However, if the steward chooses to not suggest EAP because of the risk of experiencing that sort of reaction, he or she may be depriving an employee of a valuable resource. Rather than not referring at all, it may facilitate the referral conversation if the steward reminds the employee that everyone is faced with challenges that are difficult to resolve independently. Seeking assistance for personal problems is just as important as receiving assistance for medical problems.

For stewards who need help in figuring out how to make a referral, EAP counselors will consult with or train union representatives how to approach employees. Counselors will educate stewards in how to identify and interact with employees who need assistance. Stewards can call EAP for a confidential consultation on making the referral. Remember, a steward need not become the counselor, but can help a

fellow employee by directing him or her to the counselor.

Finally, never discuss the employee's problems with anyone else. A steward is bound by the rules of confidentiality, just as management is. EAP is a very sensitive issue and benefit, and the rights of employees must be carefully guarded. Careless talk about a fellow employee's EAP referral, even if not done with ill intent, could be just as destructive as the situation that brought the employee to EAP in the first place.

EAP following a crisis

Problems that individuals are having is only one focus for EAP. A steward can facilitate an EAP response when tragedy strikes at a given office. Following a traumatic event—such as an employee's unexpected death, the death of an employee's family member, a natural disaster—employees as a whole may become anxious, depressed, and unable to concentrate.

Stewards should be aware that EAP can provide on-site individual or group intervention after a tragic event takes place. Such sessions allow employees to learn about stress reactions to tragedy and also the associated symptoms. The goal is to provide coping skills that can lead to healing.

NALC connection to EAP

Before 1992, EAP was administered solely by the Postal Service. In those days, many employees were suspicious of these assistance programs because it was controlled by the Postal Service.

However, the Service no longer has sole jurisdiction of EAP. A Na-

Training Seminars & State Conventions

Listed below are the educational and training seminars for 2007. For more information, contact your National Business Agent.

Region 1—NBA Manny Peralta (714) 750-2982
California, Hawaii, Nevada, Guam
Nov 30-Dec 2 Regional Training Seminar, Los Angeles

Region 2—NBA Paul Price (360) 892-6545
Alaska, Utah, Idaho, Montana, Oregon, Washington
Oct 22-25 Regional Assembly, Coeur d'Alene, ID

Region 3—NBA Neal Tisdale (309) 762-0273 Illinois
Oct. 28-31 Statewide Fall Training, Peoria

Region 4—NBA Wesley Davis (501) 760-6566
Arizona, Arkansas, Colorado, Oklahoma, Wyoming
July 13-14 Arizona State Convention, Litchfield
Sept 28-29 Regional Rap Session, Cody, Wyoming

Region 5—NBA Mike Weir (314) 872-0227
Missouri, Iowa, Nebraska, Kansas
Aug 27 OWCP training (NALC/DOL), Kansas City
Oct. 21-23 Iowa Fall Training, Coralville
Oct. 27-28 Nebraska Fall Training, Grand Island

Region 6—NBA Pat Carroll (248) 589-1779
Kentucky, Indiana, Michigan
Oct 6-8 KIM Regional Training, Indianapolis, IN

Region 7—NBA Ned Furr (612) 378-3035
Minnesota, North Dakota, South Dakota, Wisconsin
Sept 15-16 South Dakota Training Seminar
Sept 30-Oct 3 Minnesota State Convention, Brainerd
Oct 26-28 North Dakota Fall Training, Fargo
Nov 3-4 Wisconsin Fall Training Seminar

Region 9—NBA Judy Willoughby (954) 964-2116
Florida, Georgia, North Carolina, South Carolina
July 27-29 Region 9 Rap Session, Daytona Beach
Oct 19-21 FL Stewards Training, St. Petersburg
Oct 26-27 NC Training Seminar, Greensboro
Nov 3-4 SC State Convention, West Columbia

Region 10—NBA Gene Goodwin (281) 540-5627
New Mexico and Texas
Aug 1-3 Texas State Convention, Galveston
Oct 7-8 Region 10 Fall School, Ft. Worth

Region 11—NBA William Cooke (518) 382-1538
Upstate New York and Ohio
July 26-28 Ohio State Convention, Cleveland
Sept 9-11 NY State Convention, Saratoga Springs

Region 12—NBA William Lucini (215) 824-4826
Pennsylvania, South and Central New Jersey
Sept 27-29 PA State Convention, Camp Hill

Region 13—NBA Tim Dowdy (757) 431-9053
Delaware, Maryland, Virginia, West Virginia, Wash DC
Oct 7-9 MD/DC State Convention, Ocean City

Region 15—NBA Lawrence Cirelli (212) 868-0284 New York,
Sept. 9-11 NY State Convention, Saratoga Springs

tional Joint EAP Committee was established under Article 35 of the National Agreement between NALC, the Postal Service, and APWU. NALC's representative on that national committee is Director of Safety and Health Brian E. Hellman. This committee provides oversight of EAP and also guides the program at the national level.

The branch and EAP

"EAP is such a valuable tool for us. We integrate it into our tool-

box—where we have the contract, the grievance procedure, route inspection tools. EAP is just another great tool," said Miami Branch 1071 Treasurer Laurie Miale.

President Dave Gwin of Kansas City Branch 30 points out how EAP is all the more relevant for employees in his branch. "Especially now, EAP is a great help. Now that we have mandatory overtime and people working six days, it really wears on families. Children and spouses are getting involved in the process," said Dave.

A demanding and hectic workplace can make an individual's personal problems all the more difficult to deal with. EAP is a benefit of employment that is free and as easy to access as picking up the phone. A steward can't be the therapist, and shouldn't try. But a wise steward will help an employee find the resource that is also a benefit. Wisdom isn't knowing all the answers; wisdom is knowing where to go to get help in finding the answers.

USPS

BY THE NUMBERS

Fiscal Year 2007— First Half

USPS Operations	Number	Change from SPLY*
Total mail volume year-to-date (YTD) (Millions of pieces)	110,114	0.9%
Mail volume by class (YTD in millions)		
First-Class	49,772	-1.3%
Priority Mail	481	-2.2%
Express	28	0.0%
Periodicals	4,421	-3.7%
Standard (bulk mail)	53,689	3.2%
Packages	621	-0.6%
International	452	6.1%
Daily delivery points	148 mil.	1.8%
Percent city	68.45%	-0.8%
Percent rural	29.64%	1.8%
Percent Highway Contract	1.91%	3.1%
City carrier routes	163,412	-0.6%
Rural carrier routes	74,871	2.9%

*SPLY = Same Period Last Year

USPS Operations	Number	Change from SPLY*
Estimated Net Income (\$mil.)**	\$(3,810)	-342.1%
Total Revenue	\$37,955	2.3%
Total Expense (pre-PAEA)	\$37,059	4.5%
Total Expense (after PAEA)	\$41,874	N/A
City carrier employment	223,483	-0.4%
Percent union members	92.8%	0.0%
City Carrier Casuals	5,808	13.8%
Percent of bargaining unit	2.8%	—
Transitional	0.0	-100.0%
Percent of bargaining unit	0.0%	—
City carriers per delivery supervisor	17.8	-1.7%
Career USPS employment	687,126	-1.3%
City carrier avg. straight-time wage	\$22.67/hr	1.7%
City carrier overtime ratio (OT hrs/total work hours)	15.1%	—
Ratio SPLY	14.6%	—

**Net income negatively affected by PAEA (by \$4.8 billion)



A NEWSLETTER FOR BRANCH LEADERS OF THE NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF LETTER CARRIERS



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