Mound City Carrier

Official Publication of Branch 343

Mound City Carrier
1st Place: Best Photo or Cartoon
2026 NALC Publication Awards

St. Louis, Missouri
Chartered 1892

Volume 77, No. 11 | *"Diversity is our Strength and Unity is our Power"* | November 2026

Branch 343 Shop Steward of the Year Honorees for 2026



Front Row (L-R) Step-A of the Year Quinton Jones; Shop Stewards of the Year, Mikella Smith, Susan Eaisley, Carmillia Jackson, Brian Gray and Brittany Franklin-Terry.

Back Row (L-R) RAA Patrick Baker, Executive Vice President Brian Litteken, NALC Director of Health Benefits, Stephanie Stewart, Branch 343 President John McLaughlin, Vice President/Financial Secretary Marvin Booker and RAA Larrissa Parde.

The Case for Shortening the Road to Top Pay

… By President John McLaughlin



Reducing the time to top pay is about more than just wages. It's about fairness, recruitment, retention, and the long-term strength of our workforce. A career in the Postal Service should offer a reasonable path to financial stability. But when it takes more than a decade to reach the maximum salary, we have to ask whether the current system serves our carriers, our customers, or the future of the service.

Equal Work Deserves a Fairer Path to Equal Pay: City letter carriers perform the same essential work regardless of when they were hired. They deliver mail and packages, serve customers, learn routes, and meet the daily demands of the job. Yet carriers hired under different pay structures can spend years earning substantially different wages while performing the exact work.

Seniority and experience have value, and our wage structure should recognize them. However, there is a difference between rewarding experience and requiring newer career employees to wait an excessive number of years to reach the top pay. Shortening the progression would help narrow the gap without eliminating the value of seniority or long-term service.

Recruitment and Retention Matter: The Postal Service needs qualified carriers who are willing to make being a letter carrier a career. Pay plays an important role in that decision. New carriers compare postal employment with other available jobs, considering not only starting wages but also how quickly their earnings can grow.

A long climb to the top can make a promising career less attractive, particularly to younger workers facing housing costs, transportation expenses, student debt, and family responsibilities. It can also discourage employees who see years of waiting before reaching top pay. The service invests time and money in recruiting and training employees. When carriers leave for better opportunities, that investment is lost, and the process starts all over again. A shorter path to top pay would not solve every retention problem, but it would give employees a stronger financial reason to stay.

Experience Should Be Rewarded, Not Delayed: Experienced carriers bring knowledge and skills that benefit the entire service. They understand their routes, recognize delivery challenges, build relationships with customers, and develop the judgment necessary to handle difficult situations safely and efficiently.

The service benefits when carriers remain on the job. Reaching top pay sooner would recognize the value of their continued service while allowing them to earn a competitive wage earlier in their careers. Retirement benefits, seniority, and other career advantages would continue to reward long-term employment.

Armed, off-duty police security provided at every meeting at the Union Hall



MOVING?
WE NEED YOUR NEW ADDRESS!

If you have moved, please notify the branch office directly. Personnel does not notify us of your change of address.

Name_____
Address_____
City/State _____
Zip _____

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The Cost of Waiting Adds Up: Every year spent below top pay affects a carrier's cumulative earnings. The difference between a lower step and the maximum rate can amount to thousands of dollars annually. Over several years, that difference can significantly affect a family's ability to purchase a home, save for retirement, pay everyday expenses, or build financial security.

These are not abstract numbers. They represent real opportunities postponed for employees who perform essential public service. The union should evaluate proposals using actual pay tables and the financial impact on carriers at every step. The goal should be to shorten the climb without sacrificing top-step wages, cost-of-living adjustments, or other negotiated benefits.

Building a Stronger Future for the Craft: NALC has already made progress in shortening the pay progression through changes negotiated in the 2023–2026 agreement. That experience demonstrates that the structure can be improved. The next round of negotiations should build on that progress and seek a more reasonable timeline for reaching top pay.

HISTORICAL PROGRESSION TO TOP STEP

Period	Approx. time to top pay	What happened
Before 1970	21 years	Postal employees were under the federal GS system.
1971–1984	8 years	Postal Reorganization Act compressed the progression substantially following the 1970 postal strike.
1984–1991	10.7 years	Step structure was changed and progression lengthened.
1991–2013	12.5 years	Further changes increased the time to the top.
2013–2019	12.4 years	Das Award created the newer Table 2 for carriers hired after 1/12/13
2019–2025	13.3 years	The 2019–2023 N.A. produced the longest climb in NALC history.
2025– present	12.4 years for new Table 2 carriers	Steps AA and A were eliminated, shortening the climb by 92 weeks.

The career climb went from **21 years before 1970, down to 8 years after postal reorganization, and eventually up to 13.3 years under the 2019–2023 agreement.**

What does the effect of reducing every step by 6 weeks have on how long it takes to reach top pay? **46 weeks → 40 weeks:** This would be a reduction of 6 weeks per step. With roughly 14–15 step movements. This would reduce the time to top pay by approximately 80–90 weeks, or about 1½–1¾ years. So, a carrier who currently takes roughly 12.4 years could potentially reach top pay in roughly 10.7–10.9 years. That would put the climb much closer to the historical 10.7-year period of 1984–1991, while still being considerably longer than the eight-year progression that existed from 1971–1984.

A strong career carrier workforce depends on attracting new employees, retaining experienced carriers, and offering compensation that makes long-term service worthwhile. Shortening the path to top pay supports all three goals. Ultimately, this is about fairness and the future of mail delivery. City letter carriers should not have to spend an unnecessary portion of their careers waiting to earn top pay for their work.

Until next month, do your job safely and accurately. Show up to your union meeting—you might learn something. We don't write the rules; we just have to play the game. Sláinte

Assignment of Arrow Keys, Update to Handbook M-41

… By Executive Vice President Brian Litteken



The Postal Service notified the NALC of revisions to *Handbook M-41, City Delivery Carrier Duties and Responsibilities*, to reflect current processes related to the assignment of Arrow Keys. The updated language to Handbook M-41 is as follows:

"All carriers must complete PS Form 1106 Arrow Key-Daily Accountable Log (as prescribed by the form) or use the electronic Mobile Delivery Device (MDD) (or the equivalent) to scan assigned arrow keys in and out as directed by management."

The previous language in Handbook M-41 was the following:

"A numbered check is issued to each employee. When you surrender the check, you will be given a set of Arrow and/or padlock, and/or truck keys. (In some instances, a signature is used in place of a numbered check.)"

USPS TO TAKE EXTRA STEPS TO ENSURE BALLOT DELIVERIES

On October 1, the Postal Service said that it will implement extraordinary measures to ensure the delivery of ballots for the November 2026 congressional elections. Starting on October 4 through November 3 retail branches may extend hours to accept ballots. A "Ballot Postmark Only" line may be established at the retail counter, or a drive-through Ballot Mail option may be available. Also starting on October 24, carriers must check every mailbox for outgoing mail, regardless of whether the delivery point has incoming mail.

AMAZON PM DELIVERY PILOT

A letter from USPS notifies President Renfroe that the service will be conducting a pilot program called, *Amazon PM Delivery Pilot.* "This pilot involves afternoon drops from Amazon between 12:00 PM and 1:00 PM (local time), that are then sorted by the clerks manually and available for same day delivery by City Carriers between the hours of 2:00 PM and 8:00 PM."

The pilot for Morgantown WV SD&C and Lake Havasu City was scheduled to begin September 29. These locations have a volume cap of 200 packages with three routes required per facility, averaging 67 packages per route.

The pilot for Columbia SC S&DC is scheduled to begin on October 20. Columbia SC S&DC will have a volume cap of 500 packages with five routes required, averaging 100 packages per route.

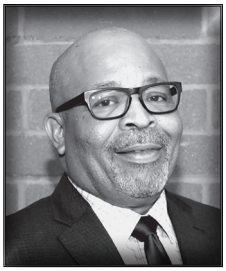
MARK YOUR CALENDAR

DON'T SIT ON THE SIDELINES … GET INVOLVED!

Nov. 9 – Dec. 14	PSHBP Open Season
Nov. 11	Veteran's Day Observed
Nov. 12	Regular Branch Meeting
Nov. 26	Thanksgiving Day Holiday
Dec. 2	Retiree Meeting
Dec. 3	Shop Stewards Meeting
Dec. 10	Regular Branch Meeting

Be Thankful and Thoughtful!

… By Vice President Financial Secretary Marvin Booker



Thanksgiving is a holiday of solidarity — commemorating the short-lived moment when Pilgrims and Native Americans broke bread together at a common table. Families and friends will gather to spend time together and remember everything we must be grateful for. We should be especially mindful of our good fortune and remember those who came before us who paved the way for that good fortune.

On March 17, 1970, letter carriers in New York City led a general postal strike against what was then known as the Post Office Department to protest poverty-level wages. Carriers and other postal workers throughout metropolitan New York — and soon, in other cities across the country — followed suit. This successful strike by nearly a quarter-million postal workers led to the August 12, 1970, signing of the Postal Reorganization Act which, among other things, gave NALC the authority to bargain collectively for the National Agreement with the newly created United States Postal Service.

If you watch any of the available footage of the Great Postal Strike of 1970, you can sense the bravery of the strikers as well as the fellowship and camaraderie they had for one another in the face of dire consequences — termination and even incarceration. Against real adversity, the strikers stood their ground together. However, I have noticed that the same solidarity that I appreciated early in my career seems to be slowly disappearing with each retiring carrier.

As time has gone by, the carrier workforce has become more selfish and isolated. As a result, carriers seem to spend less time socializing together off the clock. I worry that our members are losing sight of what makes this union special, as well as the source of its power and strength. It is our **unity.**

If we are to retain the salary and benefits the letter carrier craft provides, it is important to remember that it takes unity to prevail as a labor union. We must not allow management, the enemy of organized labor, to divide and conquer all this union has built. We must reunite the workforce. Unity means the state of being united. Solidarity means to stand as one, in unity. We must, at a minimum, care for one another. Instead of focusing on what someone else has that you do not, focus on where your rights may be violated. I cannot understand those who focus on making sure that other carriers are equally violated rather than focusing on what we can do together to protect our rights.

Each of us must start by standing up for ourselves. Contact your steward when you feel pushed to meet management's productivity goals or write a statement to protect a co-worker's rights. We call each other brother and sister in this union for a reason; because when it comes to our career, we must operate as one family. We must not just sit passively and watch sh#t happen! I implore you to get more involved!

Become a leader in your office. If there is an open steward position, fill it! If there isn't an on-the-job instructor in your office and you consider yourself to be a "professional" letter carrier, do it!

There is a need for experienced letter carriers to serve as mentors to help guide new employees through the obstacles, difficulties, and stumbling blocks they will surely encounter during the early stages of their careers. Attend branch meetings and see if the issues that plague your office are a problem elsewhere.

Take a minute to check out the Branch 343 or NALC websites. Take time to read the national and branch periodicals, periodically! If you do not like the way our politicians on Capitol Hill treat the USPS or our union, donate to the Letter Carrier Political Fund (LCPF), it is one of the most powerful labor PACs in the country.

You don't have to do all the things I've suggested, but at least think about it. I will be thankful. Until next time happy Thanksgiving.

Recording Secretary

… By Recording Secretary Richard Brown



I hope everyone has a great Thanksgiving holiday with friends and family. This is the time of year when old memories of celebrations with your loved ones come up. Some of them are no longer with us and if this is the first year for that, it can be rough to get through. Just remember to pray for strength to make it through, especially if you have others to be with. Some people have no one to enjoy the holidays with and nowhere to go, so be thankful for what you have.

I would also like to thank all of the veterans for your service. There will be a parade November 7 in downtown St. Louis. I hope you have an opportunity to enjoy it.

OVERTIME 2.0

I wrote last month about overtime and how management has been dispersing it. I know every office does not assign the overtime the same way, although they should, but you should be aware of the proper way it is to be assigned. I explained that all who are on the daily list and all PTFs scheduled to work, should work to their maximum (12 and 11.5 respectively) prior to non-ODL carriers working overtime.

With the holiday season approaching, you can be sure that management will try everything and make every excuse for working non-ODL carriers prior to maximizing the list. Keep your eyes peeled for that type of violation and file the grievance when it occurs. If management tells you to work overtime and you are not on the ODL list, you have been drafted. They may call it volunteering but it is simply drafting. Again, file a grievance.

Then there is the work schedule change. It seems that every year at this time, management moves our starting times back and sometimes without the proper notification. We start later and it gets dark sooner. There is nothing wrong with that, is there? What management does not consider is the need to be more cautious when delivering in the dark. This of course leads to working at a slower pace, which means you may incur more overtime than initially scheduled.

Be careful not to get caught taking unauthorized overtime. If you believe you will go past any previous authorized return time, contact the office to get instructions/approval. If management tells you to keep going, complete another PS 3996 upon your return for the extra time taken and have management approve it.

ELECTIONS

NALC national election ballots should have been received and returned by now. Based on their own writing, the ballots should have been counted on October 19 or the day after, but they have not announced a specific date when the winners will be announced. There were some issues with ballots being returned for some reason but, hopefully, that does not compromise the integrity of the voting.

Local elections for Branch 343 are coming this month. The good news is that only one position was contested (recording secretary) and you only have two choices, but you can only select one. Please get that ballot completed and returned immediately in preparation for the retrieval and counting of ballots. That usually happens around early November, so return your ballot asap.

Until next time, be safe and complete your assignment with respect for the customer.

2026 Branch 343 Calendar Correction:

Please be aware of a correction to the Pay Periods in the month of December.

Pay Period 01 on December 12, 2026, should be Pay Period 27.

Accordingly, December 26, 2026, should be Pay Period 01.

"Citizens United" Must Go

… By Managing Editor Tom Schulte



If you haven't taken the time, you should read the USPS Office of Inspector General (OIG) reports conducted throughout the United States over the last two years. Virtually all of the investigations are condemnations of postal operations; delayed mail, inadequate personnel, rerouting parcels, and improperly trained managers.

Each one of these investigations point out the problems, offer solutions, but then leave the deficiencies up to the same facilities targeted to correct their own problems. Guess what? Nothing is ever done. Customer complaints regarding delayed mail are now almost a recurring feature on the nightly news.

Now step in our reliable congressmen to assess the complaints, demand accountability, draft legislation to get to the bottom of this mess and …. You can hear the crickets chirping. I came, I saw, I did nothing.

The U.S. Postal Service is being run into the ground by a buffoon postmaster general who has no vested interest in its operational efficiency. In fact, he sat on the board of directors of FedEx. Does anyone see a conflict of interest? If ever there was a time for congressional intervention, it's now. But seriously, what can we hope for?

By the time you read this article the mid-term elections will be over. If pundits are correct, there will be a "Big Blue Wave" taking place and presumably there will be a return to some kind of normalcy in this country. I'd like to believe that, but I don't. The attention span of an average American is limited to the time that he or she scrolls from one post on TikTok to the next. In other words, not that long. Meaning that a democratically controlled Congress has about six months to undo all the harm this current administration has inflicted on this country before the next election cycle.

Corruption runs rampant in our government and it's imperative to get the money out of politics. But there is one thing they can and should do. In 2010 "Citizens United," was a ruling affirmed by the Supreme Court that gave corporations and PACs the green light to spend unlimited sums of money on ads and other political tools. That decision greatly expanded the idea of "corporate personhood," a term used to indicate that corporations are separate from individuals that run them and are able to exercise rights individuals would have when conducting business. In fact, the writers of the Constitution created the Bill of Rights in order to protect individual liberties of the people from an overbearing government, not to protect the rights of corporations.

While "Citizens United," supports the argument that both corporations and unions can give unlimited amounts of money to support political candidates, it is dissimilar in as much as unions only comprise 8% of the workforce and can never match the output of corporate donations. Legalized indirect influence of prospective candidates undermines democracy by allowing wealthy for-profit corporations to control many actions of those politicians should they win. Not only is this morally reprehensible, but it undermines the foundations on which America was built and what the framers of the Constitution intended.

Polls indicate that more and more Americans are losing confidence in the government, in part due to the immense amount of influence from large corporations. Without a limit to political spending, however indirect, democracy is threatened as politicians are compelled to listen to the corporations which pay for their campaigns rather than the voters who actually put them in office.

If our republic is to survive, elections need to be based on the will of the people and not manipulated by unlimited financial influence. If Congress could accomplish one thing in the next six months, it should be to end Citizens United.

Health Benefits Plan/OWCP



… By Barry Linan

November greetings to all of the brothers and sisters of NALC Branch 343. It was reported in September that our overmatched PMG David Steiner is unhappy with all of the scrutiny his job requires and was especially hurt by the congressional grilling he got over undelivered mail and Trump's unconstitutional scheme to have the USPS oversee state's voter lists. PMG Steiner was reportedly considering resigning from his position as PMG. Aww, boo hoo, Davey, don't let the door hit you on the way out back to your FedEx job!

HBP NEWS

This year's PSHB Open Season begins on Monday, November 9 and runs thru midnight on Monday, December 14. It's also Open Season for FEDVIP dental and vision plans. If you're going to add a plan or change your existing health plan, go to the PSHB enrollment site at ***health-benefits.opm.gov/pshb***. You will then need to identify yourself by using your ***login.gov*** account. If you don't already have one, be aware that setting it up involves a lengthy 10 step process and requires you to share a photo of your state issued ID for authentication. If you have problems setting up a ***login.gov*** account, you can call the **PSHB Helpline at 844-451-1261** and active carriers can also contact **HRSSC at 877-477-3273**.

The PSHB plan premiums for 2027 have now been released and are available for comparison at ***opm.gov/pshb*** and at ***health-benefits.opm.gov/pshb***. There is a listing of the 2027 nationwide FFS (fee for service) High Option health plan premium rates, including our own NALC HBP, in this issue of the MCC for your comparison. There are also Consumer Driven health plans available if you want to save money on premiums in exchange for higher out of pocket costs. **NALC HBP rates for 2027 are as follows:**

High Option Plan	Biweekly (Active)	Monthly (Annuitants)
77A Self Only	$116.06	$251.46
77C Self Plus One	$290.00	$628.33
77B Self and Family	$270.37	$585.80
CDHP Consumer Driven Plan	**Biweekly (Active)**	**Monthly (Annuitants)**
77D Self Only	$80.53	$174.48
77F Self Plus One	$183.15	$396.83
77E Self and Family	$198.26	$429.56

Again, I note that our Self Plus One premium rate is higher than our Self and Family. Some other health plans also have this same anomaly. You can save by enrolling in the Self and Family plan, even if there are only two family members being covered. Comparing the PSHB High Option rates list (note some refer to their High Option as Standard), you can see our plan is cheaper than all the others except GEHA. I believe our plan benefits are comparable to those of Blue Cross/Blue Shield, but at a much cheaper premium rate! Also, consider that our own NALC HBP is the only PSHB plan that is 100% union-owned, union-administered, and all union employee staffed!

If you are enrolling or making changes to your FEDVIP dental or vision plans, go to the ***benefeds.gov*** website. You can also call for help with **FEDVIP** enrolling at **877-888-3337**.

The new wrinkle in this year's Open Season, due to a new rule from our friends at OPM, is that the USPS is now required to *"verify all open season elections **in which a family member is added** before the enrollment can be finalized."* There are a whole list of ***"Acceptable Documentation"*** requirements, depending on that family member's relationship to you, that must be provided to the USPS before your enrollment is finalized. Note this applies only when a family member is **"added"** during your open season enrollment. It does not apply to family members that are already enrolled on your health plan. You are also supposed to notify HRSSC or OPM when a family member is no longer eligible, as in divorce or a child turning age 26.

PSHB HIGH OPTION PLANS (FFS – Nationwide)

BI-WEEKLY PLAN PREMIUMS 2027 (ACTIVE)

Plan	Self Only	Self + One	Self and Family
APWU	142.97	279.13	358.28
BC/BS (Standard)	196.30	435.86	490.62
GEHA (Standard)	84.77	182.26	225.18
MHBP (Standard)	137.78	395.93	372.83
NALC	**116.06**	**290.00**	**270.37**
RCBP	179.37	346.96	339.96

MONTHLY PLAN PREMIUMS 2027 (RETIREE)

Plan	Self Only	Self + One	Self and Family
APWU	309.77	604.78	776.27
BC/BS (Standard)	425.32	944.36	1063.01
GEHA (Standard)	183.67	394.90	487.90
MHBP (Standard)	298.52	857.85	807.80
NALC	**251.46**	**628.33**	**585.80**
RCBP	388.63	751.75	736.58



BRANCH LEGAL PLAN
Advice and Consultation on
General Practice and Civil Actions.

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Region 5 NBA Report

… By David A. Teegarden



REGION 5 RAP SESSION

The Region 5 Rap Session will take place Thursday, February 4, through Sunday, February 7, 2027.

Rooms: The link to secure rooms has been sent via email to branch presidents a few days ago. However, that same link below must be used to secure rooms for all attendees. We currently have a block of 200 rooms for Thursday, Friday and Saturday nights. We will have two full days of training, Friday and Saturday and a national officer Rap Session on Sunday. Please make the necessary motions in your branches so that your rooms can be secured in advance. The guaranteed room block and rates close at the beginning of 2027. Room rates are $139 a night plus taxes and fees. *https://book.passkey.com/e/51341078*

Class sign-up will be done via a QR code which will be made available in November.

Some of the classes offered will include beginning, intermediate and advanced steward training.

Classes include:

- OWCP
- Branch officer training
- DRAC
- Article 8
- Route adjustment and review
- Retirement
- LMOU
- Region 5 chat
- Building winning case files
- Process and procedure
- Arbitration decisions and settlements in Region 5 (CAU)
- Safety and health

The Region 5 staff and I look forward to seeing all of you at this event.

PENALTY EXCLUSION PERIOD

The Penalty Exclusion Period for 2026 begins Pay Period 26-2026 week 1 (Nov. 28) and ends Pay Period 27-2026 week 2 (Dec. 25). Even though the exclusion period eliminates the payment of penalty overtime, it does not change the provision in Article 8.4.G which requires that carriers be paid two and a half times their base hourly rate for any hours worked beyond 12 hours in a service day or 60 hours in a service week.

2027 HEALTH BENEFITS RELEASED

The NALC Health Benefit Plan's 2027 Postal Service Health Benefits (PSHB) rates and coverage details have been released. Full details can be found at *nalchbp.org*. You can also call the plan directly at 888-636-6252 for more information about rates, benefits or enrollment questions.

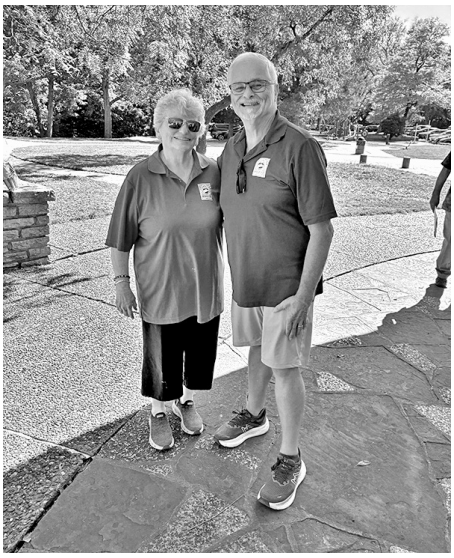
Open season enrollment period begins Monday, November 9 and closes Monday, December 14.

Take a look at the NALC Health Plan. It is one of the best values and in the PSHB plans, not to mention one of the lower priced options.



Beautiful Fall Weather for the Annual Retiree Picnic

Creve Coeur Memorial Park – October 7, 2026







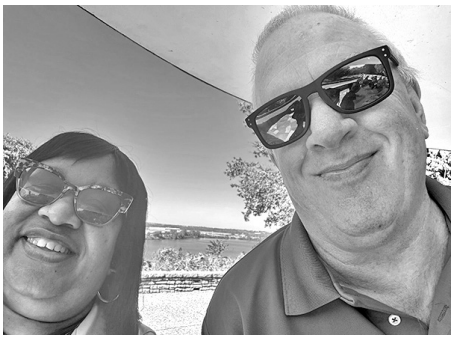














2026 Branch 343 Shop Steward of the Year Awardees



STEWARDS OF THE YEAR



For outstanding service to the principles of unionism and exemplary performance as a union steward these awards are presented on behalf of the membership of Branch 343 NALC



Brittany Franklin-Terry, *Mackenzie Pointe:* Brittany began her postal career in January of 2016. She was appointed as an alternate steward in January of 2025, then a steward in July. She is constantly seeking out additional training. She is a regular at most shop stewards meetings, where new stewards are encouraged to call the Union Hall early and often for guidance. Brittany always follows those instructions, and she also has the perfect temperament when dealing with insane management. Her decisions are always level-headed and measured. Her efforts have helped to settle down a station that seems chronically out of control.



Brian Gray, *Southwest:* Brian started his postal career in January of 2016. He was appointed as an alternate steward in June of 2022 and as a shop steward in October. Brian was asked to be the second steward at a two-steward station. His station, Southwest, has had to endure four full/partial route inspections in just the last two years. He performs his duties quietly and with little fanfare. He is a fixture at every shop steward meeting while being busy at home with a newborn baby. Brian is totally invested in being a shop steward, even his bride became a steward herself just last year.



Carmillia "Nikki" Jackson, *Normandy:* Nikki began her postal career in 2016. She was appointed as alternate steward in November of 2022 and became a full-time shop steward in September of 2024. She is another one of our stewards who regularly attends most of the stewards meetings. She is very aggressive in filing grievances and works closely with us at the Union Hall to ensure the grievances are done properly. While she is persistent, she takes a very rational approach when it comes to management. She demonstrates a great deal of patience when dealing with half-wit managers.



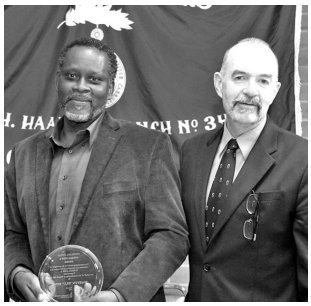
Susan Eaisley, *O'Fallon:* Susan began her postal career in October of 2018. She was appointed as a shop steward in February of 2026. She represents an associate office which has had a long tradition of incompetent and abusive management. She is quick to ask questions of the hall and other stewards. Susan has been eager to learn more, and as such attends all of the steward training. Like many of our stewards, her kindness when working with management is often met with hostility. As it is, her husband, James, is a carrier at Town & Country and has been around the USPS a bit longer. Susan came home one evening complaining how mean management was and James reminded her, "You're not here to make friends, you're here to make money."



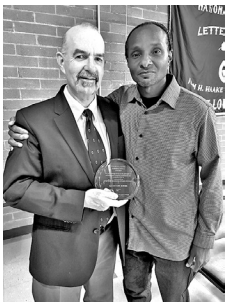
Mikella Smith, *Affton*: Mikella started her postal career in April of 2021. She was appointed shop steward in July of 2023. Affton station can contractually have two shop stewards. The prior lone shop steward had just bid out. For a brief time, this left the station without any stewards and to make matters worse, two of the stupidest and most ornery managers wreaked havoc over the carriers. Mikella stepped in as steward and has displayed a fiery and dogged determination that one cannot teach. In fact, there have been moments when we needed to reign her in. She doesn't take well to carriers being denied their contractual rights, nor being treated poorly.

FORMAL STEP-A's OF THE YEAR

For outstanding service to the principles of unionism and exemplary performance as a Step-A steward these awards are presented on behalf of the membership of Branch 343 NALC



Marvin "Blu" King, *Sappington:* Blu began his postal career in 2008. He became an alternate steward in July of 2017 and a full-time steward in November of 2017. He bid out of two different stations but remained a steward before becoming a Formal Step-A. Blu is a man of few words, but his prodigious workload speaks for itself. He currently has 66 grievances. More often than not, you will see him working on cases during the general meetings and even at the executive board meetings. He is often asked if he is getting overwhelmed with his workload, but he just flashes a smile and says, "I'm good." Blu is only the fourth steward to win Step-A of the Year Award twice, having won previously in 2023.



Quinton "Q" Jones, *Jennings:* Quinton began his postal career in April of 2013. He was appointed as an alternate steward in May of 2017 and steward in July of 2019. He received a Shop Steward of the Year Award in 2021. Because of his progress as a steward and the workload at his office, he was made a Formal Step-A. Because of his artful way of negotiating with management, the Union Hall doesn't have to worry about his station. Quinton is a regular attendee at the shop stewards meetings. His hands are quite full at his station. He will often call to give us a "you can't make this sh#t up" story. In addition, he has taken on the responsibility as the primary caregiver for three children from his niece who passed away from COVID. To say he is busy is an understatement. He carries the banner proudly of "Making Jennings Great Again."

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SPECIAL ACHIEVEMENT AWARD



Kenny Young, *Southwest* *(not present):* Branch 343 likes to recognize a member who selflessly pursues and exemplifies all the qualities you want in a union brother or sister. Kenny Young has been a letter carrier since August of 1992 and on the same U-string at the same station almost his entire career. One thing he may love more than being a carrier, is raising money of the Muscular Dystrophy Association (MDA). After only four years as a carrier, he started the MDA Buddy Bass Tournament at the Lake of the Ozarks. He has a multitude of volunteers, and he is well-connected in the bass fishing community. Kenny has raised nearly $300,000 for MDA in the last 30 years. This year was his last year of doing the tournament. He has always been reluctant to come to the Union Hall or go to MDA award ceremonies and take credit. Kenny just wanted everyone to know that he wanted to thank all of those who have volunteered to help over the years.

Scenes from the Shop Stewards Banquet







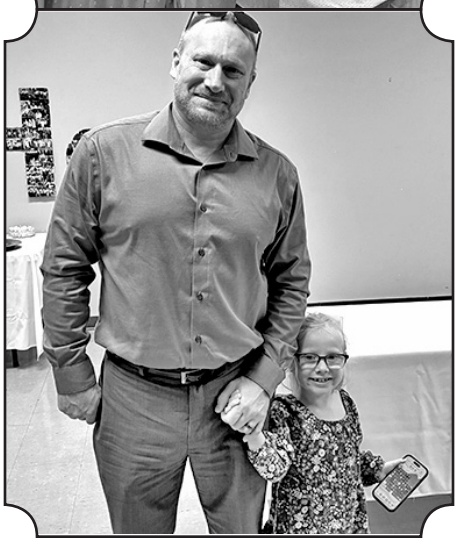












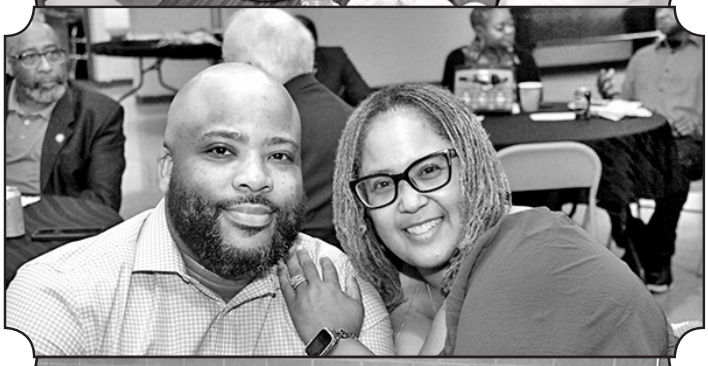


Letter Carriers Hall, October 10, 2026













West County Retiree

… By Pam Stepney



Greetings sisters and brothers of Branch 343. How's everybody doing? Fine, I hope! I want to give a shout-out to all of the stewards and Step A representatives who won awards at the Shop Stewards Banquet. Bravo! If it had not been for those stewards and Step A representatives on your side, where would you be?

West County's very own CCA Carmelia, aka Nikki Jackson, won! We here at West County are truly proud of you. Way to step up and fight the good fight for your members in Vito Reid. Plus, she's a Step A representative now, so some of you may see her in your office defending your members.

The other winners were Britney Franklin-Terry from Mac Pointe, Quinton Jones from Jennings, Marvin "Blu" King from Sappington, Susan Eaisley from O'Fallon, Mikella Smith from Affton, and our very own Vice President-elect Richard Brown's son, Brian Gray, from Southwest. Congratulations to each and every one of you!

Remember, you are the future, so keep making a difference and be the change you want to see. Remember to pull some more carriers up with you to keep the union strong.

If you are a steward and did not attend, you missed some good cooking from Home Style. It was finger-licking good! Marvin told me to bring my own Tupperware next time because they prepared a feast fit for the kings and queens who attended.

NALC Director of Health Benefits Plan Stephanie Stewart was the guest speaker, and Larissa Parde spoke for the business agents' office. They were great.

If you missed the retirees luncheon at Creve Coeur Park this year, you missed a treat. Like the O'Jays say, it's so nice to see all the ones you love while sitting, talking, and enjoying each other's company. If you could not make it this year, set your calendar and plan to attend next year. It's always on the first Wednesday of the month in October.

Now, you can put the November retirees meeting on your calendar, too! It's on the first Wednesday at noon. Lunch is served at 1600 South Broadway. See you there or be square!

The golf tournament was really fun this year. We had a lot of golfers, and the food was good, too. If you're not a golfer, next time come out to support your union sisters and brothers. Plus, you can volunteer along with me and everyone else.

I know we don't shout shout-outs, but if we could, I would shout out Kelvin Ward as the best-dressed golfer again this year! Plus, Jimmy Clements, Dave Curran, Vince Galli, and Todd O'Neil were there. Phil Winkler and Jack Harrison played without Darryl Vaughn this year.

Rickett Oliver, Vice President-elect Richard Brown, Oliver's brother-in-law, and Kelvin Ward were a team. Denny, Marlon, Rick White, and another young man were there, too. Business Agent Dave Teagarden, his wife, Kelly, and Charlie Sexton played along with another member.

If I didn't say your name, count my head, not my heart! Hopefully, you will see your team photo in the November issue.

If you play all year, make plans to come out next year, see your friends, and volunteer if you don't want to play.

Take 10 people with you to the polls on November 3 and vote for union-friendly candidates. Vote NO on all amendments on the ballot, except Amendment 6. Vote YES on Amendment 6.

John Haake/Charles Coyle Scholarship applications are in this Mound City Carrier you're holding right

now. You know your senior is busy, so fill out the application yourself! Put it in the mail before December 31, to give them a chance at $1,500. They also offer a $1,500 trade school scholarship. Charles Coyle offers a $1,000 Luck of the Draw scholarship, too.

Happy Thanksgiving!

Remember to do your best, don't stress, listen to all the motions at the union meeting, GOD bless, and thank you for coming!

South County

… By Matt Gleiforst



Hello from South County. I would first like to thank everyone that voted in our recent national union election. At the time of writing this article, we do not know the results, but I feel confident that whoever wins, we are in capable hands. Every candidate that ran for a position, in my opinion, was well qualified and I believe that the winner will do everything they can to lead us in a good direction. I am honestly happy for us to be in a new chapter now and, hopefully, any wounds of the past can start being repaired and we members can all have faith in our great union once again.

As far as locally, there really is not a lot of news to report. The delayed mail that we had been dealing with for so long at South County hasn't been an issue lately. All of the routes are being delivered in full for the most part, so that is a positive for our station. Hopefully, this will continue to be the trend as we move forward, and our customers will notice quicker delivery. That being said, customers have still been dealing with uncertainty from the USPS for quite a while, so we still need to be extra understanding if they are complaining about us. Let's reassure them that we carriers are doing everything that we can and try to give all of our customers a good experience with us. After all, we have to provide the best customer service we can, especially since the organization we work for seems to not really care much about customer service at all.

I would also like to comment on the situation of the "dumped" mail that was found. I do not know the specifics of what happened, but I will say that we as carriers should **never** throw mail away for any reason. Not only is it illegal, but it is also immoral. Our customers are paying for this mail to be delivered and if we choose to throw it away, we are stealing from those that keep us employed. Always deliver the mail or bring it back to the station. I along with everybody else would like to retire someday and if things like dumping mail continue to show up on the news, this will become much more unlikely to happen.

I want to see this great service go back to being just that. It is up to all of us to be at our best each day and give our customers the best service that we can, even if our employer makes that difficult to do. Our customers are the reason that we have careers and the least we can do is put a smile on our faces while delivering their mail. They deserve that much and we can do that for them.

Until next time, keep your heads held high and keep surviving.

The Best and Worst of Italy

… By Retired Letter Carrier Mike Laury

We made our flight from St. Louis to Chicago in 45 minutes this past September. It would take another seven hours before we finally boarded our connecting flight, a 787 jet to Rome, Italy. Chicago's O'Hare airport is so large, we were easily swallowed up among the hustle and bustle of other travelers trying to catch their flight or find the correct gate. I felt just like a letter carrier assigned to his first route. I even saw two people that worked at the DMV running in a full out sprint to catch their flight, as several Rascal scooters easily overtook them. That sounds about right. We finally got to Gate 31 to get a good spot, where we waited and waited and waited some more. It's a dangerous thing when my mind starts to wander. Things like "Should I have tipped the baggage porter more before we left St. Louis? Does all the luggage wind up in a place like Bangladesh due to disgruntled baggage handlers? Should I buy my brother Dave, who hates the Cubs, a T-shirt of the Cubbies for his next birthday?"

Nearly six airport hours passed before the announcement came, "The plane is 90 degrees, and it will take an hour to cool off. Thank you for your patience." Well, that's not a very good omen. Finally, we slowly boarded and got to our seats. Another announcement. "There seems to be a bit of a software issue with the plane's instrument panel. We hope to correct it shortly. "Wait, what?! You mean the button that controls the landing gear or maybe the carburetor that sends fuel to the engine? It doesn't work like my wife told me." A few minutes later, we finally take off. Looking back, I probably should have passed on the documentary I saw last week, titled, "The Worst Airline Disasters in History." We eventually climbed to 37,000 feet, traveling at 617 miles per hour in this flying death tube that was spitting us into the lower stratosphere. I hit the airplane bathroom about 30 minutes into our nine-hour flight, wondering if this was a good spot to be before the plane began breaking apart. The flushing suction sound that a 787 United Airline toilet makes was designed to scare you spit-less, which for me it did. In fear of being sucked out of the plane in a compromising position, I quickly stood up and hit my head in the 3-foot-by-3-foot stall.

I rekindled my faith during the remainder of that flight and finally, nine hours and ten minutes later, we touched down in Rome, Italy. I saw a few taxi drivers holding up signs like the scene in the first Die-Hard movie and was disappointed that there were no McClane signs being held by a guy named Argyle. I did see a sign that said Berenson and never did see the old redhead. I'm guessing the Italians weren't into St. Louis Blues hockey history as "the sign guy" looked at me with a blank stare and shrugged his shoulders when I asked him where I could find an old number seven Blues sweater in their quaint little airport. He may have been repressing the 11-0 shellacking the Italian hockey team experienced in the recent Olympics at the hands of Finland.

We took a taxi from the airport, and the driver did his best impression of Bill Murray's character in the movie "Stripes" as we weaved in and out of traffic at an alarming speed. He spoke Italian and was on his cell phone the entire way to our hotel, driving with one hand, and apparently talking to a friend while dropping numerous "F-bombs," along the way. I almost stiffed him on "the tip" but thought better of it in fear of retribution by the Vatican mafia, or something like that.

I hope everyone enjoys their Thanksgiving this year. I'm thankful that we arrived back home in one piece after our 13 days of travels abroad. I'll tell you more about our trip after the holidays. Rest in peace, Mr. Forsch.



Application for the John H. Haake Scholarship Award



Fill out and mail to: John H. Haake, Branch 343
Scholarship Committee
1600 S. Broadway
St. Louis, MO 63104

Date _____ (Please print clearly)

Please send instructions as to how I can compete for a scholarship award. I will be a senior in the 2026-2027 school year.

I am the (child) (grandchild) of (retired) (active) (deceased) letter carrier _____ (Name)

My name is _____ Home phone _____

My home address is _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

_____
Signature of NALC parent member (or spouse if deceased)

_____
Date

_____
Signature of Branch Officer

_____
Title Date

(For Office Use Only)

THIS FORM MUST BE POSTMARKED BY DEC. 31, 2026.



NOTICE FOR THE 2027 MISSOURI STATE ASSOCIATION OF LETTER CARRIERS CHARLES J. COYLE SCHOLARSHIP AWARD



DATE _____

I am the son/daughter of active/retired/deceased letter carrier _____ of Branch # _____, state of Missouri. I am a high school senior in this 2026-2027 school year. Please send instructions as to how I can compete for a scholarship award.

NAME OF APPLICANT _____

HOME ADDRESS _____

CITY _____ STATE _____ ZIP _____

PHONE NUMBER (_____) _____

SIGNATURE OF NALC PARENT _____

SS# OF NALC PARENT _____

MAIL COMPLETED FORM TO: MISSOURI STATE ASSOCIATION OF LETTER CARRIERS
CHARLES J. COYLE SCHOLARSHIP AWARD
c/o Mark Godbee, V.P.
1876 Burlewood Dr.
St. Louis, MO 63146-3616

NOTICE: MUST BE POSTMARKED BY DECEMBER 31, 2026.

BRANCH MEETING

BRANCH 343, ST. LOUIS, MISSOURI
OCTOBER 8, 2025

Summary of Branch Action

MSC To pay the branch bills.

MSC That the branch sponsor a hole for $100 at Branch 127 (Jefferson City) MDA Golf Tournament.

MSC That Branch 343 hosts a dinner for the Mound City Carrier committee along with our printers: Larry, Pam and Jason Kratz for their work in preparing the publication every month on behalf of the members of Branch 343.

MSC That Branch 343 assists in providing warm meals for the homebound elderly during the holidays by donating $200 to Meals on Wheels.

MSC That Branch 343 say thank you by making a $500 donation to the United Way for their assistance during the Food Drive for 2026.

MSC That the branch send an additional officer with the branch president to the Committee of Presidents' meeting in November of 2026 and pay expenses

New Members

Lorenzo Bernard	Normandy	9/19/2026
Ines Flenoy	Arnold	9/26/2026
Janel McNeal	Des Peres	9/26/2026
Christian Oelke	Rolla	10/3/2026
RonSanto Powell	South County	9/26/2026
Thomas Schnur	Affton	10/3/2026
Melodie Wild	Sikeston	9/17/2026

Recently Retired Member

David Gerik	Fenton	9/30/2026



Branch Meeting Attendance Prizes

1.	Blues vs. Columbus Blue Jackets	Oct.10	Andre Hayes, Retired
2.	Blues vs. Montreal Canadiens	Oct. 27	Mike Weir, Retired
3.	SLU Billikens vs. Lehigh	Nov. 2	Deon Littlejohn, Gravois
4.	SLU Billikens vs. N. Kentucky	Nov. 10	Lucille Snow, Retired
	50/50 RAFFLE 317268	$54	Mustafa Alshalabi, Gaffney

Highlights

The meeting was called to order at 7:39 p.m. The invocation and Pledge of Allegiance were led by Chet Drain and the minutes were read and accepted.

Retirees Report, *Tom Schulte:* The retiree picnic was held on Wednesday, October 7 at Creve Coeur Park. There were 48 in attendance. Tom thanked the NBA office for picking up the tab. He also thanked his wife, Linda; Gino Iberg and his wife; and Art Buck for helping and providing drinks and snacks at the picnic.

Labor Council Report, *Pam Stepney:* Vote for the candidates supporting middle-class workers and labor. Vote NO on Prop A and Amendment 3. Vote yes on Amendment 6. You can view information on the candidates on the Labor Council website. Get out and vote.

Health Benefit Report, *Barry Linan:* The 2027 rates are out. Under NALC High Option, rates are going down for self-only and self+1. Self and family increased by $2.95. If the coverage is for just you and one other, choose self and family instead of self+1, it's cheaper. Blue Cross (self and family) is $490.62 biweekly compared to NALC $270.37.

OWCP Report, *Barry Linan:* PTFs get injured and management fails to give them proper documentation (CA-1, CA-16).

Mound City Carrier Report, *Tom Schulte:* If you received your ballot for national officers, it must be in their PO box by October 19. This weekend we have Shop Steward Banquet on October 10, MDA Golf Tournament on October 11. Brian is still looking for volunteers and hole sponsors. Locally, most officer seats were won by acclimation. This is listed in the MCC. There will be an election for the remaining position(s).

Haake Scholarship Report, *Pam Stepney:* Displayed scholarship applications in the MCC and explained how to apply and who is eligible. Each is worth $1,500. We have received two applications so far. One award will be for vocational school.

Trustees Report, *La'Tecse Litteken:* The books were audited and are in good standing.

Political Action Committee Report, *Mike Weir:* Read the names of the contributors. The COLA is currently 3.5% and could rise.

Legislative Report, *Mike Weir:* Early in person voting begins October 20 (city & county), eight different libraries in the county are available. Don't be intimidated by ICE and DOJ agents who may show up at polling places. Avoid the situation by voting early. We have a strong chance of winning the House and may get the Senate also. Contribute to PAC and LCPF.

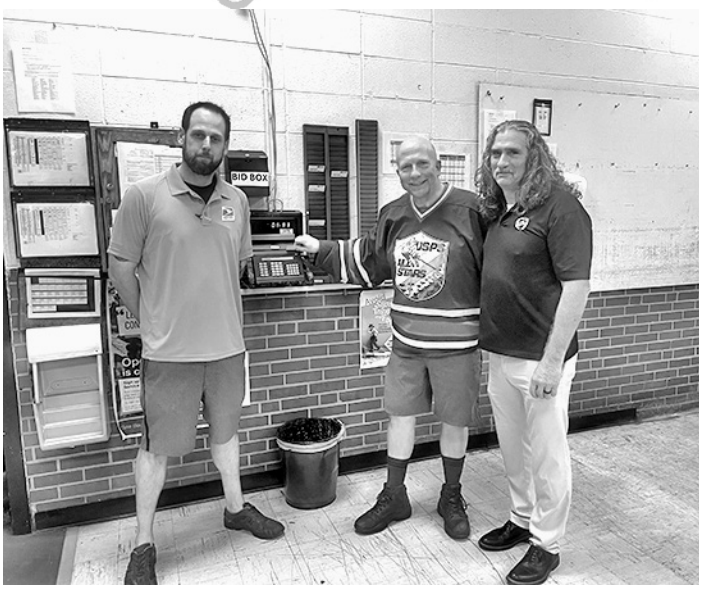
Executive Vice President/Treasurer Report, *Brian Litteken:* M-41 Handbook will be updated regarding Arrow Keys. Carriers have to sign for keys again. Starting October 4 – November 3, post office may extend retail hours to postmark ballots. Also starting October 24 till election, you must check every delivery point to check for outgoing mail, even if you have no mail for them. New Amazon package process; you may be required to go back for packages between 2-8 for same day delivery.

Vice President/Financial Secretary Report, *Marvin Booker:* Read his report for September. Watch your mail, some national ballots are being returned to people. Call the hall if you are unsure what to do.

President's Comments, *John McLaughlin:* Sent email regarding Shop Steward Banquet. We will have NALC Director of Health Benefits Stephanie Stewart in attendance. We have one position contested in our branch election (recording secretary). John spoke to PM about the inspections at Des Peres and Kirkwood. He advised if senior routes are taken, 41.3.O will be invoked. PM advised she would speak to the RCI team and have them contact her prior to any decisions. Postal management claims the mass rebidding cost them $1 million. People called John concerned about the branch's finances after the motion made at September meeting. He clarified our financial state, and we are not in dire straits. He did agree that a motion should have been made and Brian was right to make a motion. He hopes we send people to the RAP session in February 2027.

Respectfully Submitted,
Richard Brown, Recording Secretary

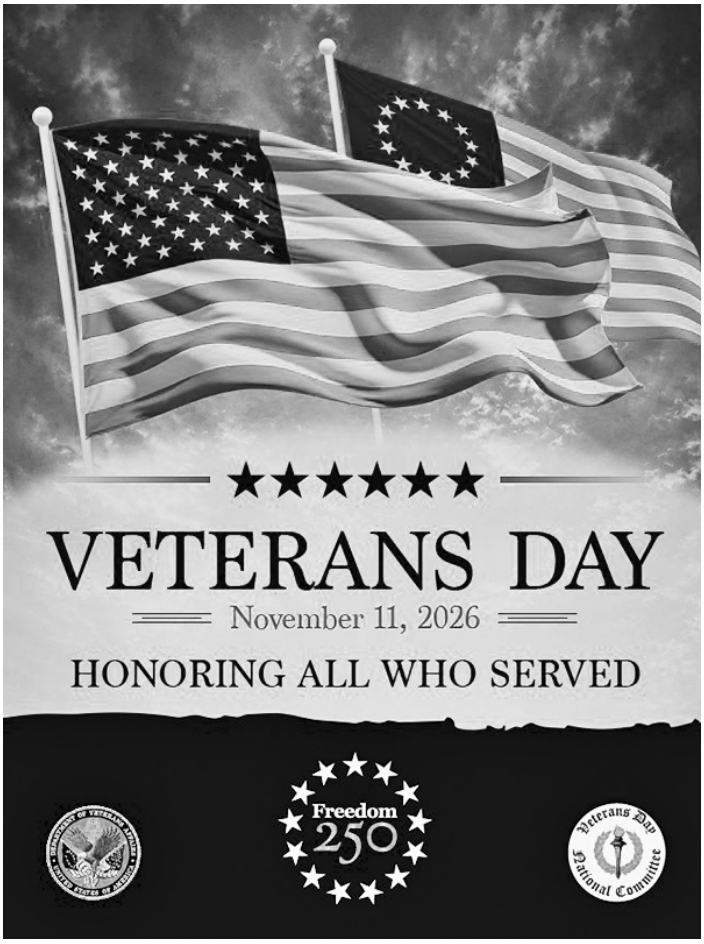




Fenton letter carrier Dave Gerik receives congratulations on his retirement from Shop Steward Steven Powers and Br. 343 Executive Vice President Brian Litteken



Retiree Daniel Winkler receives his 50-Year Gold Card at the recent Retiree Picnic. Appearing (LtoR) Br. 343 President John McLaughlin, Mike Weir, Daniel, RAAs Larrissa Parde and Charlie Sexton







Political Action Honor Roll

JOE POLITTE★★★★★★
JOE FITZJARRELL★★★★★
RICH RHYNER★★★★★
ART BUCK★★★
DAN BRAUCHLE★★★
CATHERINE CIARAMITARO★★★
JOHN H. HAAKE★★★
TONY JASPER★★★
IN MEMORY OF JIM ROBERTS★★★
MIKE WEIR★★★

MARVIN BOOKER★★
JIM BRUGGEMAN★★
BARRY LINAN★★
LAWRENCE McHAYNES JR.★★
KEN MEYER★★
LYNN RAY PRATT★★
SHONNA RANDLE★★
DEAN WERNER★★
CHARLES ALBRECHT★
RICHARD BOIEN★

JOE CANMAN★
JOHN S. CHUDY★
BEVE CREELY★
JAMES T. GOHEEN★
SAMUEL GOODMAN★
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ROY HATCHARD JR.★
GENO IBERG★
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JOHN McLAUGHLIN★
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IN MEMORY OF JOSEPH P. REGAN★
TOM SCHULTE★
PAMELA STEPNEY★
DARLENE TATE★
RICHARD THURMAN★
KEVIN WELBY★

DON CHARTRAND
ANDY GARCES
CAROLYN T. HOUSE
LAWRENCE McHAYNES JR.
SHONNA RANDLE
DENNIS STEGMANN
SARONDA SUTHERLAND

The above honor roll gives special recognition to those members who give $50 or more. Each star represents $100

IS YOUR NAME LISTED? WHY NOT?
SEND YOUR CONTRIBUTIONS PAYABLE TO BRANCH 343, P.A.C.
MIKE WEIR
612 CHARLESTON OAKS DR.
BALLWIN, MO 63021-7387

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PLEASE BE ADVISED IN REGARDS TO ANY ARTICLE SOLICITING CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE LETTER CARRIER FUND OR OUR OWN POLITICAL ACTION FUND

By making a contribution to the Letter Carrier Fund or our local Political Action 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 and Branch 343 Political Action Fund will use 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 tax deductible for federal income tax purposes. Federal law prohibits the Letter Carrier Political Fund and Branch 343 Political Action 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.

Happy Thanksgiving from the staff of the MCC



John H. Haake
BRANCH 343

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Brian Litteken ..... Executive Vice President/ Treasurer
Marvin Booker..... Vice President/ Financial Secretary
Richard Brown.....Recording Secretary
Frank Enlow ..... Sergeant-at-Arms
Saronda Sutherland ..... MBA Representative
Barry Linan .....Health Benefits Representative

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Barry Linan — William Lister
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John McLaughlin

MOUND CITY CARRIER

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You may submit articles and photos from events and retirement photos to:
tomnalc@sbcglobal.net
If you submit a photo, please identify all members in the photo.

All copy should be TYPED in upper and lower case, double spaced and written on one side only. Articles are to be limited to 500 words and must be signed.

Opinions expressed intend no malice toward anyone — neither do they necessarily express the views of the editor nor that of Branch 343 N.A.L.C.

Articles may be edited for brevity and potential libelous statements.

LETTER CARRIERS BUILDING
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VP: 314-517-3200

Hours: 8 am - 5 pm (M-F)
8 am - Noon (Sat)

Fax: 314-241-2738

Website: **www.branch343.org**

HEALTH BENEFITS HOT LINE

Barry Linan — Hall: 314-241-4223
Tuesday 8 am to 5 pm

WORKMEN'S COMPENSATION HOT LINE

Barry Linan — Hall: 314-241-4223
Wednesday 8 am to 5 pm

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NBA OFFICE

David Teegarden — 314-985-8040
RAA Charles Sexton
RAA Larrissa Parde
RAA Patrick Baker

RETIRED MEMBERS MEETING

LETTER CARRIERS BUILDING
1600 S Broadway

1st Wednesday of the month.
Lunch at noon, meeting at 12:45 pm

Tom Schulte, Chairman 636-255-3057
Kevin Welby, Vice Chairman.....314-398-4802
Mike Chenot, Treasurer 314-779-3356
Nicki L. Prado, Recording Secretary.....314-241-4297

Deadline for articles for the DECEMBER issue is NOVEMBER 16, 2026

★ ★ ★

REGULAR BRANCH MEETING
THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 12, 2026
7:30 pm

★ ★ ★

SHOP STEWARDS MEETING
THURSDAY, DECEMBER 3, 2026
7:30 PM
The Letter Carriers Building
1600 S Broadway

ALLIED PRINTING TRADES UNION LABEL COUNCIL ST. LOUIS, MO

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