

## Branch 84 Newsletter

Representing Letter Carriers in Southwest Pennsylvania Mar/Apr. 2017

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### President's Report

Ted Lee

#### Skipping Lunches

A Letter Carriers lunch is a contractual entitlement. It is a 30 minute break from the task of delivering mail. The lunch extends your day, is unpaid and is sometimes necessary for the safety of some Carriers. The Lunch break also helps to add an element of normalcy to each Letter Carriers work day. It is for all these facts and (many more not listed) as to why it is extremely alarming to me, that so many Carriers tell us, they skip their lunch. (I won't even discuss breaks).

Skipping lunches hurts your route. When skipping lunches or breaks, not only are you giving the Postal Service work for free, but doing so regularly, creates an inaccurate picture of your route. How can you help the assessment of your route long term if you consistently skip your 30 minute lunch, to accomplish a 30 minute pivot? This sounds silly. But it is actually happening every day and it needs to stop. If you cannot accomplish an issued pivot without skipping your lunch or break, alert management immediately by requesting and submitting a 3996. **Make sure you request a copy back for your records.** If management gives you a hard time when you request, submit or ask for a copy back, tell your Steward or call the Hall the same day. (Remember you need to leave early in order to complete a pivot. If you do not leave before your scheduled time, it turns into overtime). If you cannot leave early enough to do the pivot, put that

down as one of your reasons for submitting a 3996. Another reason for the 3996 would be not on the ODL *if you are not*. You also need to put down an estimate of how much assistance you need to get back on time. So remember your 30 minute lunch is a contractual entitlement. It is unpaid, needed medically for some and adds normalcy to our busy and often times, hectic work days.

#### Spring Route Inspections

It should be noted there are several Branch 84 offices on the Spring Inspection schedule. Remember whether your office is inspected 'full blown' or through a negotiated agreement, once the adjustments are implemented (right or wrong) this is an **opportunity**, clean slate or reset for each of you to do your route consistently **that includes daily lunch and breaks**. Newly converted CCA's (take it from me), you cannot skip your lunch and breaks daily and expect to do this job for 30 years.

#### Pilots and Test sites

Western PA is testing several new ideas with plans to go National depending on success. (For good or bad) it is a reality our members work under. **Predictive delivery** is one of the pilots being tested in our district. This new pilot gives customers (who sign up) the ability to know when and what mail they will receive each day. **Pre-Load Pilot** is another pilot being tested in our District.

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This test pilot is primarily for Amazon delivery. Parcels are pre-loaded so that when the carrier arrives at work, all the carrier has to do is load their equipment right onto their one or two ton vehicle. Remember with any new idea or test there are issues that must be worked out before it can be considered a success. Feel free to offer input on any of these new pilots or email suggestions to the Hall. We will raise these issues or suggestions directly to the Postmaster. The final test being initiated in Western PA (from the Postal Inspectors) is the **Arrow Key Initiative**. This test was in response to the numerous arrow keys in our district not being accounted for. This initiative has been rolled out in Pleasant Hills, East Liberty, Sharpsburg, PA Station and Canonsburg. The Union has assisted in this roll-out (given the potential safety issues associated with lost arrow keys). The initiative is primarily to re-establish the accountability of all arrow keys in the following ways; Carriers will sign out their arrow key, vehicle key and gas cards (if applicable) all on the same form along with a zip lock bag. The carrier will take all of the items with them (you may leave gas card with management if it is not needed that day). Once carriers complete their route and come back. They will place their **arrow key only** inside the zip lock bag. They will then place the zip lock inside the collection box (that is inside their building for such purposes). Each office accounts for vehicle keys and gas cards differently, so follow the procedures in place for your office. Smaller stations will have a lock box instead of a collection box. (The key lock for the collection box will be changed to limit accessibility). As part of the roll-out Postal Inspector Cemal Lazier also reiterated the Postal Services I.D. Badge Policy. Which requires that all postal employees must wear

their I.D. badges visibly while on postal property. (On the street Inspector Lazier acknowledged that displaying badges is not always possible due to the potential of damaging or losing it) given the active nature of our jobs as Letter Carriers. Carriers just need to have it on their person so that it can be readily produced if you are asked while on the street. On a final note on this initiative the Postmaster City of Pittsburgh's official policy is if a Carrier forgets their badge at home they must punch out, go home and get it. If a Carrier loses their badge they must report the loss immediately to their immediate supervisor, and pay a \$5.00 replacement fee. If your badge is worn, faded, expired or needs to be replaced. You will not be charged a fee provided you have the old badge to exchange for the new one. My suggestion to all members is to do what I do. Keep your badge in your car not your house. This way you won't have to drive all the way home to get it if you forget it on your dresser. As always none of these initiatives or test pilots will compromise any of your contractual rights. Let your Steward know or call us at the Hall if you believe this has happened.

#### **Labor Management Meetings**

- Canonsburg L/M Meeting was held 2/7/17. (The minutes will be shared jointly with management via service talk on March 9, 2017).
- The City of Pittsburgh L/M Meeting was held on 2/8/17. (The Minutes, Agenda and sign in sheet have all been posted on the web site).

As always Stewards if there are issues that you are having a difficult time resolving, with your local management. Please call the Hall so that we can help set up a local L/M Meeting in your Station.

# Retirement Benefits

Randy Ball, EVP

Thinking about retirement? The following benefits are something you will need to consider keeping as you retire.

## Benefits Facts FEHB

When you retire, you are eligible to continue health benefits coverage if you meet all of the following requirements: – you are entitled to retire on an immediate annuity under a retirement system for civilian employees (including the Federal Employees Retirement System (FERS) Minimum Retirement Age (MRA) + 10 retirement); you have been continuously enrolled (or covered as a family member) in any FEHB plan(s) for the 5 years of service immediately before your retirement date, or for the full period(s) of service since your first opportunity to enroll (if less than 5 years).

The 5 year requirement period can include the following: the time you are covered as a family member under another person's FEHB enrollment; or – the time you are covered under the Uniformed Services Health Benefits Program (also known as TRICARE) as long as you are covered under an FEHB enrollment at the time of your retirement. As an annuitant, you are entitled to the same benefits and Government contributions as Federal employees enrolled in the same plan. • The event of retirement is not a qualifying life event (QLE); however, there are other opportunities to change FEHB enrollment including during Open Season or when you experience a QLE. • If you retire with a Self Only enrollment and later want to cover eligible family members, you can change to a Self and Family enrollment during the annual Open Season or when you experience certain QLEs. • If you are not enrolled in FEHB (or covered as a family member) at the time of your retirement, you cannot enroll when you retire. • If you are enrolled in a High Deductible Health Plan (HDHP) with a Health Savings Account (HSA) at the time of your retirement, you can still contribute to your HSA provided you have no other insurance coverage other than those specifically allowed, and are not claimed as a dependent on someone else's tax return. Some examples of other coverage that would cause ineligibility are: Medicare, TRICARE, other non-high deductible health insurance, or having received VA benefits or IHS benefits within the previous three months. If you don't qualify for an HSA, your plan will enroll you in a Health Reimbursement Arrangement (HRA). • If you cancel your FEHB enrollment as an annuitant, you will never be able to reenroll in FEHB unless you had suspended your FEHB enrollment because you had become covered by a Medicare Advantage plan, TRICARE or CHAMPVA, Medicaid or similar State sponsored program of medical assistance, or Peace Corps volunteer coverage. • If you want your surviving family members to continue your health benefits enrollment after your death, you must be enrolled for Self and Family at the time of your death, and at least one family member must be entitled to an annuity as your survivor. • Consider whether you need to sign up for Medicare when you become eligible.

## Benefits Facts

FEDVIP • There is no 5 year requirement for continuing FEDVIP coverage into retirement. • Your coverage will

continue as a retiree. Retirees may also enroll during the annual Federal Benefits Open Season or when they experience a qualifying life event (QLE). Keep in mind that retirement is not a QLE. • In most cases, changing from payroll deduction to annuity deduction is automatic, but may take one to three months to occur. You will pay premiums on an after-tax, not pre-tax basis. It is advised that you contact BENEFEDS at 1-877-888-3337 prior to retirement in order to eliminate any suspension in coverage. • BENEFEDS cannot deduct premiums from your annuity while you are receiving "special" or "interim" pay. Once your annuity is finalized, premium deductions will begin. If you miss one or more premium payments before your annuity is final, BENEFEDS will make double deductions until any balance due is paid. They will notify you before deducting this additional premium amount. Once there is no past due balance, the amount of premium deducted will return to the regular monthly premium. FSA • You may request payment only for the expenses of services or items received up to and including your retirement date. • Exception: if you retire on December 31, you are eligible for the FSA Grace Period, so you may request payment for expenses received through the following March 15. • Your FSA claims will be processed if they are received at the FSA Customer Services Center by September 30 of the year following the plan year. • You cannot continue your FSA coverage after you retire. • You must pay a full period contribution for any pay period during which you are on Postal Service rolls, even if it is only the first day of the pay period. (The payroll system does not prorate your FSA contribution.) • The collection of FSA contributions (including the collection of missed contributions) relates strictly to the amount of the contributions you were scheduled to make each pay period while you were an FSA participant. • What you actually claim, whether it is more or less than what you were scheduled to contribute each pay period while you were an FSA participant, does not affect what you must pay in contributions. • If you missed contributions you were scheduled to make from your paychecks because you were on Leave Without Pay (LWOP) or had low pay, you must make up the missed contributions. • If you missed contributions, you cannot reduce what you owe by not filing claims. These rules apply to any type of retirement, including a disability retirement. • Refer to booklet FSA BK1, Flexible Spending Accounts, which is available at <https://liteblue.usps.gov> each open season, for the details.

FEGLI • When you retire, you are eligible to continue your FEGLI life insurance coverage(s) if you retire on an immediate annuity and had the coverage for: – the five years of service immediately before the starting date of your annuity or, for annuitants retiring under FERS who postpone receiving their annuity, the five years immediately before their separation date for annuity purposes, or – all period(s) of service during which that coverage was available to you if it is less than five years, and – you (or your assignees) do not convert the coverage to a private policy. • If you are eligible, you will choose how you wish your coverage(s) to continue during your retirement by submitting a Standard Form (SF) 2818 continuation of life insurance. • If you are not enrolled in FEGLI at the time of your retirement, you cannot enroll when you retire. • You cannot newly elect or increase existing coverage after you retire. You may only reduce or cancel

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## **Big Brother's Watching**

**Patrick Rothwell, Vice President**

As letter carriers, we are required to carry our scanners on our persons at all times (this is specific to park & loop routes). This is a mandate due to the need to scan parcels, accountables, sample requests, collection boxes, ect. What you may or may not know is these scanners are tracking your every step. The Postal Service has developed the Delivery Management System (DMS) to improve carrier street efficiency. This system includes geo-fence technology to assist supervisors in monitoring delivery operations. Geo-fence technology is a system based on the concept of virtual geographic zones. If a carrier deviates from their designated geographic zone during street delivery, an alert is sent to the supervisor in an email or text message.

### **RIMS is Watching**

The DMS will enable supervisors to see at a glance the location of each mail carrier and determine whether the carrier is ahead or behind their scheduled delivery time. It determines your scheduled time base, on your assignments base evaluation and associated Managed Service Points (MSP). DMS combines Global Positioning System (GPS) data gathered via hand held scanning devices with data from various existing systems (DOIS, MSP, RIMS). Now that you know they can track you via the scanners, how do they accomplish this? The scanner transmits digital "breadcrumbs" not only back to the Postal Service Delivery Manager computers, but also to a team of eight (8) operational specialists in a room at the GMF who are watching your every move, and contacting the manger when they see an issue. The breadcrumbs can be used to find and retrace the steps of city carriers on their routes on any given day..

### **Bread Crumbs Trace Steps**

The DMS SYSTEM HAS SEVERAL TRACKING FEATURES. ONE OF THE MOST POWERFUL TOOLS IS THE BREADCRUMBS FEATURE that plots letter carrier movements throughout the day. This feature can be used to find a carrier or the data can be played back to see where the carrier was minute by minute throughout the workday and the exact path taken by the carrier. The idea behind DMS is the Postal Service wants to deploy the system via hand held tablets that supervisors can have with them on the street to instantly find you and most likely question you if you are behind schedule.

### **Safe and Efficient**

The DMS data can even track the speed at which the scanner moves and track the speed of the postal vehicle. The bottom line here is management is watching and has the ability to recreate, step by step, minute by minute your entire delivery/travel pattern while you are on your assignment. This is due to the fact you must carry your scanner with you at all times while working. One exception is on lunch and breaks since that is not compensable work time. If you weren't previously aware of this technology, you are now aware this type of technology exists. With this in mind, don't intentionally manipulate your workday. As always, deliver your assignment in a safe, efficient and professional manner. Remember as letter Carriers we are required to carry our scanners on our persons at all times because Big Brother is watching.

### **MDA SUPERBOWL POOL**

The winners from the Superbowl pool were:

1st Quarter-	Eric Jackson-Branch 725
2 <sup>nd</sup> Quarter (half)-	Kevin Lowery-Branch 520
3 <sup>rd</sup> Quarter-	Dave Vodark-Branch 84
4 <sup>th</sup> Quarter(final)-	Paul Miller Branch 84

Thank you to all supported MDA by buying a square.

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coverage. • Your premiums are subject to change in the future. Your premium could change based on your age and the experience of the Program. You will be notified if there is any change in your deductions from your annuity. FLTCIP • Your coverage continues into retirement provided you continue to pay premiums. • If you pay premiums via payroll deduction, then shortly before you retire, you should notify Long Term Care Partners (LTCP) at 1-800-582-3337 to make other arrangements for premium payment. • You may elect annuity deduction if you desire. LTCP cannot deduct your premium from "special" or "interim" pay. LTCP will send you a direct bill during this time. Premium deduction will begin from your annuity once it is finalized.

## Membership Report

### The Branch welcomes the following new members:

Bane, Ryan, Bethel Park  
Becker, Stacey, Canonsburg  
Bradley, Brian, Penn Hills  
Chase, Lamika, Hazelwood  
Cross, Dustin, Pleasant Hills  
D'Antonio, Anthony, Aliquippa  
Dillion, Robert, Oakland  
Doverspike, Nicholas, Natrona  
Driskill, Phillip, Pleasant Hills  
Dunn, Danielle, East Liberty  
Farrell, Timothy, Bloomfield  
Gilbert, Alecia, North Versailles  
Haddad, Adam, Verona  
Harden, Tim, Penn Hills  
Hart, Eric, Greentree  
Hudson, Daniel, Canonsburg  
Huston II, Kenneth, Pleasant Hills  
Jackson, Regina, McKees Rocks  
Jenkins, Chanel, Grant Street  
Johnson, Derell, Greentree  
King, Candace, Penn Hills  
Korn, Jacob, Bloomfield  
Kwasniewski, Andrew, McKnight  
Manzini, Ronadl, Sharpsburg  
Marsolo, Amy, Monroeville  
Martin Gregg, Greentree  
Mitchell, Michael, McKnight  
Moore, Dominique, Mt Oliver  
Murray, Stacey, East Liberty  
Nalepa, Michele, Canonsburg  
Novak, Brittney, Finleyville  
Offei, Thomas, Greentree  
Papp, Richard, South Hills  
Parrish, Vincent, Latrobe  
Payne, Michael, East Liberty  
Sassic, Stefan, Aliquippa  
Skiffington, Cari, Homestead  
Snyder, Colbee, Waynesburg  
Tarasi, Cal, Greentree  
Tursich, Dimitri, East Liberty  
Valerio, Tommy, Burgettstown  
Vatev, Mariy, Natrona Heights  
Warnock, Ashley, Castle Shannon  
Warnock, Crystal, South Hills  
Wells, Kayla, Aliquippa  
Wessels, Jackson, Oakdale  
Younger, Brandon, Penn Hills

### We congratulate the following members on their recent retirements:

Anderson, Thomas, Ambridge, 28 yrs  
Bayens, Mike, North Versailles 20 yr  
Coley, Arthur, McKees Rocks, 31 yrs  
Gardner Jr, Lawren, Uptown, 43 yrs  
Gregg, Mark, Bethel Park, 20 yrs  
Junker, Kevin, Uptown, 30 yrs

McDonson, Jeffrey, Latrobe, 19 yrs  
Michalski, James, Bethel Park, 32 yrs  
Pellish, Anthony, Allison Park, 25 yrs  
Joan Pollard, Oakland, 23 yrs  
Pustover, Jody, Imperial, 23 yrs  
Trader, Ken, Sharpsburg, 20 yrs  
Yount, John, Sharpsburg, 21 yrs

### Congratulations the following members on their conversion from CCA to Full-time:

Adkins, Jonathan, Ambridge  
Geis, Regina, Bethel Park  
Mehalich, Jessica, McKees Rocks  
Moran, Brandon, McKees Rocks  
Perri, Brittany, Ambridge

### The following will be converted on March 4, 2017:

Conley, Christopher, Coraopolis  
Downey, James, Glenshaw  
Galley, carley, Greensburg  
Pashuta, Ben, Coraopolis  
Perry, Eric, Baden  
Sandsmark, Scott, Greensburg  
Sloan, Michelle, Aliquippa  
Smith, Christopher, Greensburg  
Warren, Devyne, Canonsburg  
Williams, Christopher, Aliquippa

### Financial Report

The Branch had the following bank balances as of January 31, 2017:

Associate Fund	\$ 75,963.66
Convention Fund	23,714.42
Officers Fringe Benefit Acct.	20,364.25
Building/Scholarship Fund	<u>47,309.44</u>
Total All Funds	\$ 167,351.77

### BAND MEMBERS WANTED:

Branch 84 has sponsored a marching/concert/convention band since the mid-1920s, but over the years, the band, under various directors, had reorganized. The present Branch 84 band (also called the Clyde Kelly Band) was reorganized in 1961, and it continues to represent the Branch in local parades and concerts ... five or six performances each year between Memorial Day and Halloween. Because of aging and lost members, the band, to maintain its vitality, is soliciting for new members in the brass, woodwind, and percussion (no strings) sections. It welcomes letter carrier musicians to join the band, subject to an easy audition. If interested, please contact Mike Schuler (412-862-9300) or Sam Manganello, interim band manager (412-824-2526).

# April is EAP Awareness Month

## Give Yourself the Power

Experiencing the stress of trying to balance your work and the needs of your family? Do you have a worry or concern that you just can't shake? Is today the day you want to start living and feeling healthier? It's moments like these when you realize your EAP is a time-saving, stress-relieving power tool that helps you do more and be more! And, it's provided to you by the USPS at no cost. Here are just a few of the areas where your EAP gives you the power to be **healthier, happier, and get more from life:**

- Improving your health and wellness
- Balancing work and life
- Managing stress; controlling depression and anxiety
- Improving relationships
- Quitting tobacco, alcohol, or drug use
- Caring for children or aging parents
- Working through grief and loss issues

**Be sure to check out [www.EAP4YOU.com](http://www.EAP4YOU.com).** Visit topic-related centers. The in-depth information you want most is right at your fingertips in easy-to-navigate, dedicated centers. Discover interactive wellness tools. Learning how you can become healthier and happier is empowering—and fun, too!

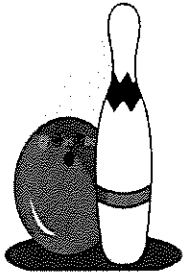
The Employee Assistance Program is Free, Voluntary, and Confidential. Your first appointment can be on the clock. The benefit is available to postal employees and members of your household. For more information about the EAP contact:

Meghan Huerbin, LPC  
W.PA District EAP Consultant  
412-322-2581  
[MHuerbin@magellanhealth.com](mailto:MHuerbin@magellanhealth.com)

Or call 800-327-4968 (800-EAP-4YOU) TTY: 877-492-7341 available 24x7.

***Make the Call!***

USPS Employee Assistance Program  
**1-800-327-4968**  
(1-800-EAP-4-YOU) TTY: 1-877-492-7341  
[www.EAP4YOU.com](http://www.EAP4YOU.com)



# Branch 84-MDA Bowling Day!

Sunday, May 7, 2017 – 11:30 a.m.

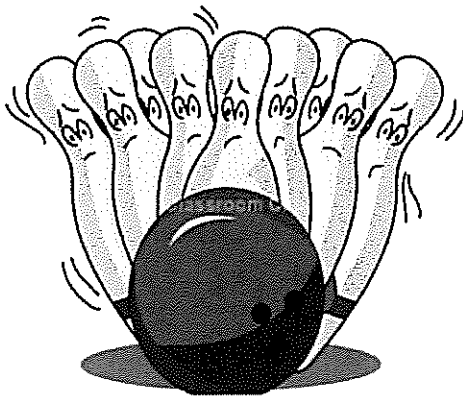
Part of NALC-MDA Deliver the Cure Bowl-A-Thon  
Food, Refreshments, Door Prizes, 50/50 Raffle after bowling

**North Versailles Bowl**  
**350 Lincoln Hwy (rte 30)**  
**N. Versailles, PA 15137**

Cost is \$15 per person – All proceeds go to MDA!  
Each member may bring one guest  
Prizes for high game and series.

**Bowlers are encouraged to get pledges and to bring donations for MDA.**

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Return this portion with registration fees to  
Branch 84, NALC  
841 California Avenue  
Pittsburgh PA 15212

Station/ Team Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Member/Guest Names: \_\_\_\_\_

**Pre-Registration is required**  
**Deadline is April 24<sup>th</sup>**

**Stations are encouraged to submit 4 person teams to compete against other stations!!!**  
**Cost includes 3 games of bowling, shoe rental, snacks, and lunch after the event.**

**Remember all proceeds go to MDA!!!!**  
**Join Branch 84 Members to help deliver the cure!!!**



National Assoc. Of Letter Carriers  
Clyde Kelly Branch 84  
841 California Avenue  
Pittsburgh, PA 15212

Non-Profit Org.  
U. S. Postage Paid  
Pittsburgh, PA  
Permit No. 3141

**Return Service Requested**

**Spring Cleaning Time?  
Clothing Donations:**

Are you retired, getting ready to retire, or have you outgrown your uniforms? Please donate your old, clean uniforms to the Branch. Your donations help the new CCA's that don't get their clothing allowance until they are out of their probation. You can drop off any still wearable uniform items at the branch office during regular business hours or on any meeting night. If getting to the Branch is not convenient, then get in touch with the steward of your closest Post Office and ask them to either drop your donation off at the meeting or get in touch with the Hall for an officer to pick it up at the their station.

**Calendar**

Mar 20	Steward Training@7:00
Mar 23	Retirees Meeting
Mar23	Branch Meeting@7:30
Apr 24	Steward Training@7:00
Apr 27	Branch Meeting@7:30
May 7	Br. 84 MDA Bowl-A-Thon 11:30 a.m. North Versailles Bowl
May 25	Branch Meeting@7:30
May 29	Memorial Day Holiday
June 22	Branch Meeting@7:30
July 4	Independence Day Holiday
July 11	Retirees Picnic @North Park
July 27	Branch Meeting@7:30
Aug 13	Picnic at Sandcastle