Deadlines, deadlines, deadlines. Here it is – December once again. The days are shorter – or at least they seem to be when it is dark going to work and nearing twilight on the way home from work. December is such a busy month with an increase in mail volume, especially packages; the deadline for the selection of health insurance; the deadline to enroll in one or two FSA (Flexible Spending Accounts) opportunities; the shopping, wrapping and baking; parties and get togethers; and preparation for the end of the year! It is exhausting just thinking about it. With all the hustle and bustle it is important that we still maintain good work ethics in performing our jobs. It is not the time to ‘cut corners’ to save a few minutes or ignore safe working habits that could jeopardize our employment. It is the time to take care of yourself – physically and mentally so you are ready to meet the challenge. Studies have shown that exercise and a good night’s sleep is a great start for good physical health. Prioritizing and taking one task at a time can benefit the mental health. If one is overwhelmed by the pressures or just feeling unable to cope there is a program available through the US Postal Service that may be able to help you or family members through difficult times. The program, EAP (Employee Assistance Program) can be accessed in the HR section on the liteblue page.

The NRLCA website recently posted an announcement that the premium costs for the Rural Carrier Benefit Plan for regular carriers as published on the 2013 RCBP Brochure and in the October issue of the National magazine are incorrect. The cost for retired carriers is correct. The correct premium costs are listed in the What’s New section at nrlca.org. Open Season for healthcare ends on December 10, 2012. Remember, if you wish to change your plan it needs to be completed by then. If continuing with the same plan, nothing needs to be done by you. Changes can be made at liteblue.usps.gov.

Flexible Spending Accounts (FSA) are tools that can help save money in your wallet by budgeting and setting aside money from your check before it is taxed. There are three different plans available to postal employees – one for healthcare, one for dependent care (child or adult), and one for employees enrolled in High Deductible Health Plans (Limited FSA). If enrolling in one of the plans, it is necessary to calculate how much is needed each year as it is a ‘use it or lose it’ plan. The maximum contribution to either of the healthcare plans for 2013 is $2500 and the maximum for the dependent care plan is $5000. FSA participation needs to be renewed each year – it is not an automatic renewal and the deadline for enrollment for the 2013 plan is December 23, 2012. Please take the time to study the brochure sent to determine if an FSA program will benefit you.

An information session on retirement was offered at the October Booster meeting. The board is in the preliminary stages of setting up a retirement seminar for April. Specifics will be offered for CSRS and FERS employees. Our guest will be the retirement specialist that presented the seminars at the national convention. Please watch your paper and state website for complete details.

As I bring this article and year to a close…I wish each of you a very Happy Holiday season and a Happy New Year! Until next year…..

Janna Hirschfeld

**Merry Christmas**

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National Steward System
CONGRATULATIONS! to Ohio’s newest longevity award recipient, MR. HUBERT O. YODER, of Degraff, OH. His career as a rural carrier began in 1956 when he was appointed as the Route 1 carrier in West Liberty by Representative Clarence Brown. When the regular carrier had retired, the substitute carrier at that time wanted the job, but Hubert had taken the test, had scored in the top three, and was a veteran, and consequently, was awarded the position. Mr. Yoder had been drafted in 1941 just two weeks before the attack on Pearl Harbor. He served the majority of his four year military career on an air base in Arizona where his previous experience at college and as a store clerk helped him in managing the motor fleet on the base. He also was instrumental in starting a men’s choir at the base.

Mr. Yoder was very familiar with the rural carrier position as his father had also been a rural carrier for over 30 years. Hubert fondly reminisced of how his father would drive a horse and wagon in the winter and a motorcycle in the summer to deliver the mail on his 27 mile route based in West Liberty. He recalled that his father had two horses and would often ‘switch them out’ when he stopped to eat his lunch. By doing that, the horses only needed to travel half of the route each day. In fact, the wagon his father used for delivery is on display at the Ohio Historical Museum in Columbus.

Hubert delivered Route 1, by car, for his entire career with it being a 39 mile route in the beginning, ending as a 75 mile route. He delivered the area around the Piatt Castles and The Ohio Caverns and recalled seeing all the school buses and children at the Caverns in the spring. He loved to see all the children. Mr. Yoder was delivering mail when the new US Post Office was built in West Liberty. Mrs. Yoder mentioned that in the Blizzard of 1978, the relief carrier rode with Hubert to deliver the mail, often walking over the drifts of snow to get to the boxes. Hubert retired in 1979 with 30 years of service.

It was a pleasure to present the longevity award of a certificate, pin and Rural Carrier History book to Mr. Hubert O. Yoder, who celebrated his 97th birthday in September. He and his lovely wife live close to Degraff and are the parents of three daughters. Congratulations Hubert!
Cyber Security: How Safe Are We?

Recently the President and the Secretary of Defense declared that the next big terrorist threat upon our nation would come through the internet to attack our computer systems. Imagine what that could do to our country? Water systems, military defense, electricity producing power plants, traffic signals, building elevators and ventilation systems in fact almost all of our infrastructure is operated by computer systems. We’ve all experienced virus infections on our computers and we’ve experienced what it can do to an operating system.

The viruses of the past were an annoyance but the viruses that are being discovered now are designed to render computers non-functional. In fact, the criminal element has found a way to make big money from infecting computers. They can either sell the infected computer to someone that can make use of them or they can simply infect the computer with a virus known as a “keylogger”. This is a virus that sits quietly on a computer and logs every keystroke made on it and sends it to the criminals behind it and gives them all the information that was keyed in on that computer; such as banking information; credit card information; address; telephone number and other personal information. In other words it steals your identity. There have been millions of dollars made by the criminal element from these computer viruses. It used to take the discovery of your social security number or the physical theft of a credit card in order to steal someone’s identity, not any longer. If you have friends or family paying bills online, you might want to make them aware of just how simple it is to gain access to personal information online. This includes social websites, which is the latest way for cyber hackers to gain information about people. All it takes to protect hard copy mail is a shredder, but here are some ways for us to provide some level of protection for ourselves.

1) Install Antivirus software. There are some very good free programs out there.
2) Update all software regularly. There are 100’s of new threats created daily. Turn on auto updates.
3) Install only trusted software. Don’t install tag along software, they are often spyware.
4) Avoid P2P (person to person) file sharing, popular for music and movies. You might end up downloading a song with a “keystroke logger” attached to it.
5) Delete unknown emails and never download unknown attachments.
6) Don’t click on ads flashing and floating around the screen.
7) Run virus scans regularly.
8) Be careful what you attach to your computer. USB flash drives and portable storage devices may be infected with an “auto download virus”.
9) Avoid shady or adult websites.
10) Install or turn on a firewall. This limits access ports to outsiders. Make sure a wireless router has a firewall built-in.
11) Secure your wireless network by setting even the most basic security with a password.
12) Use a complex password for login and change it often.

If there should be an attack against the electronic information network… I hope that the Postal Service is ready to meet the demand that would be necessary to provide communication throughout the country.

It is my sincerest wish that you have a safe and joyous holiday season and a healthy and happy New Year.

Yours In Unity and In Service,
Tom Gamble

ROGER THAT COMMANDER

As human beings we hate change and rural carriers are no different. It is sad to see the state steward system disappearing but we need change in order to move forward. By now, you should have realized that we have a National Steward System in place and I have been and will continue to work hard for a smooth transition into the new system. The former state stewards, Delbert Hutchisson of Ohio, Frankie Hunt of Kentucky, and Roger Taylor of Indiana, and I have been in contact with each other as the Cincinnati District encompasses three states. They along with the other assistants worked nonstop in the weeks leading up to the implementation of the NSS to make sure that it would be an easy transition. In fact, the NRO Steve Traylor was surprised to hear that we have all of the files separated into the two districts. That was quite an undertaking as we had at one time more than five districts in Ohio in addition to some of the old Cincinnati district moving to Northern Ohio.

Cincinnati will have a great team of upper level stewards including the former Director Of Labor Relations, Randy Anderson, serving as a part time Assistant District Representative (ADR) along with Mike Aitchison as a full time Assistant District Representative. Cincinnati is well represented! In addition two new area stewards have been added with Michael Sikyta out of Lockbourne and Philip Burmside in Kenton. With the combined years of experiences from all of these stewards, there is much enthusiasm along with many ideas. I am looking forward to working with each of these stewards as well as the local stewards.

One of the new changes in the NSS will be mail count training classes as these classes will be conducted for each district membership. Please see schedule of classes published in this issue and be sure to check the OHRLCA website for any last minute updates on these classes. They will be open to union members only and you will be receiving a postcard in the mail telling you the dates and locations of these meetings. (I have been told unofficially that the district will be counting every route in February) Secondly, the emphasis is based on mentoring stewards and delegating verses the District Reps taking on all of the responsibilities. What does that exactly mean? Local stewards may be reporting to the ADR. ADRs will be utilizing in conducting mail count classes, training local stewards, or other duties as deemed necessary. Local stewards will be mentored and developed in a step by step process. Local stewards will have one mandatory enhancement class to attend but a second class will be offered as a supplemental training. The better trained your stewards are then they are more able to defend your rights and benefits.

What would you do without your cell phone? I know I would be lost. How many times do you send and receive a text message in a day? I can’t begin to tell you the number of phone calls I have received complaining that management sent them a text message ordering the relief carriers to report to work and the RCA replied I can’t. Now management has a written word that you just refused a direct order. Text messages are NOT an official form of communication. Do not send text messages to your union steward – pick up the phone and call.

What is going on in the district? Discipline is up as they are taking a hard stance on backing accidents and issuing removals. Non backing accidents are receiving 14 day paper suspensions regardless number of years on the job or previous discipline. Since they are not willing to back down on this discipline then the union is doing everything we can to fight this injustice. Our NRO Steve Traylor has been contacted on these issues as they arise and he has had a meeting with the Eastern Area. To add insult the district is issuing letters of demands for damages to LLV’s or any kind of a tort claims that have been filed. FILE A GRIEVANCE if this happens to you.

Have a happy and safe holiday season!!

Vice President
Tom Gamble

Cincinnati DR
Cathy Funderburgh

December/January 2013
DANGER!  DANGER!  WILL ROBINSON

If the robot from the TV series LOST IN SPACE were here he would be sounding the alarm. We will be coming up on what I call round two of the Mail Count wars. The September National Mail Count is behind us and the February mail count (February 9 – March 2) will soon be here. We are coming off of two September mail counts and the last one would be considered an anomaly because of the election mail. Folks mail volume will not be what it was in September and it will be more important than ever to attend one of the mail count classes being conducted by the union across the state. The USPS does not offer any mail count classes to help carriers understand how route evaluations are compiled. Every mail count the company is counting on rural carriers to be apathetic and not educate themselves on the principals of counting mail. Do not let your route become an encumbered route evaluated to less than 37:00 weekly standard hours or you will run the risk of losing it. If your routes weekly standard hours falls below 35:00 it can be converted back to auxiliary status. There is nothing you can do about a drop in mail volume but you can make sure that you receive a proper count of your mail and that you receive proper credit for all timed office functions.

If you have attended a mail count class and you have done everything to ensure that you received a proper count of your mail and you still find yourself in a potential excessing situation the guidelines below will help you to ensure that Article 12 of the National Agreement are followed.

GUIDELINES FOR EXCEEDING REGULAR RURAL CARRIERS

The following circumstances may create a situation where there is an excess regular rural carrier in an installation:

1. Identifying Potential Exceeding Situation(s)
   a. Determine the reason for exceeding (see above).
   b. Determine the date of the potential reassignment.
      i. Allow at least 30 days for bidding outside the office.
      ii. Must be the beginning of a pay period.
      iii. Date may change based upon route adjustments, rural route postings, and awarding of rural route vacancies.
   c. Begin a rural excessing event in web Corporate Complement Management (webCCM). Utilize the templates provided in webCCM, as outlined below.

2. Posting Rural Route Vacancies for Excess Regular Rural Carriers
   a. Districts should limit the number of concurrent excessing situations, to the extent possible, to ensure the posting provisions of Article 12.3.C.1.b. may be met.
   b. When there is an identified excessing situation, all regular rural carriers in the office with the excess rural carrier(s) (impacted office) will be notified that:
      i. They will be eligible to bid for all rural route vacancies posted within the district and within 100 miles of the impacted office in other districts (see Article 12.3.C.1.b. of the USPS/NRLCA National Agreement).
      ii. The district may utilize the “Office Selection Module” found in webCCM to determine those offices with rural routes that are within 100 miles of the impacted office.
      iii. They may request to become a PTF in their office or any office in their district within 50 miles of their office in lieu of being involuntarily reassigned outside their office. (see Article 12.5.D.)
   c. If rural route vacancies are not expected in offices in the same district as the impacted office or within 100 miles of the impacted office in other districts, the parties may agree to expand the area of consideration beyond these limitations in accordance with Article 12.3.C.1.b.
   d. Vacancies from throughout the district and in offices within 100 miles of the impacted office will continue to be posted in the impacted office for the period of time from the identification of the potential exceeding situation until the effective date of the reassignment, unless the exceeding situation is eliminated through voluntary bidding.
   e. Form JB-1050R is submitted to the HRSSC in accordance with standard procedures for Job Bid Management (JBM) – Rural, for newly vacant regular rural route postings pursuant to Article 12. In those districts where there is an office(s) with an excess rural carrier(s) within the district or within 100 miles from the vacancy office; it must be annotated on Form JB-1050R and in the accompanying email that there will also be regular rural carriers from the impacted office(s) submitting manual bids for this vacancy.
   f. When the Final Vacancy Notice and Attachment is received, it is posted in the vacancy office and the automated bidding procedure must be utilized. A copy of the Final Vacancy Notice and Attachment must also be posted in impacting office(s). The vacancy notice posted in the impacting office(s) MUST indicate that the regular carriers will bid utilizing PS Form 1717-A, Preferred Assignment Multiple Bid Card, and where these bid cards are to be submitted. (ONLY those carriers in the office with the excess rural carrier(s) will utilize PS Form 1717-A for job bidding).

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Danger! Danger! Continued from Page 6

- Regular rural carriers in the impacted office will be considered (using their seniority as a regular carrier) for the vacant route and any route that becomes available as a result of filling the original vacancy with those regular carriers within the vacancy office. Regular rural carriers must indicate their preferences accordingly on PS Form 1717-A.

  g. When the Pre-Award Notice is received for the original vacancy, any PS Forms 1717-A received from the installation(s) with an excess carrier(s) will be reviewed for possible inclusion in the award.

  - If it has been indicated that the office with the vacancy will be accepting bids from an impacted office(s) via PS Form 1717-A, the HRSSC will include report R007, Complete Bidders List, with the Pre-Award Notice. This listing shows all bidders in the vacancy office for the posting and includes their seniority dates. This will facilitate incorporation of any PS Forms 1717-A into the Pre-Award Notice.

  h. If a regular rural carrier from an impacted installation is the successful bidder, the HRSSC shall be notified upon return of the Pre-Award Notice and a JB-1300 should be returned with the Pre-Award Notice appropriately identifying the successful bidder from another office. The Final Award must then be annotated manually by the local office to reflect this information.

  i. If the excessing situation is eliminated by rural carriers’ voluntary bids to other rural vacancies within the district or within 100 miles, or was eliminated for any other reason, determine which route(s) must be posted within the impacted office(s).

  - In those excessing situations involving the consolidation of an encumbered route, all the routes affected by the consolidation will be posted along with the rural route vacated by the carrier awarded a rural route in another office. NOTE: The consolidation/conversion will only be implemented following the posting and awarding of the rural route assignments.

  j. If regular carriers in the impacted office did not bid for or are not awarded a route(s) from other offices in the district or within 100 miles, the residual vacancy may be withheld in accordance with Article 12.3.C.2.c, if appropriate, until reassignment of excess carriers is complete. The appropriate NRLCA District Representative will be notified of the route, location and reason for each residual vacancy being withheld.

  - If the potential excessing situation exists due to the conversion of an encumbered regular route evaluating less than 35:00 weekly standard hours, the residual vacancy will be withheld only if it is within 50 miles of the impacted office.

  k. If the excessing situation related to either consolidation of an encumbered regular route or placement of a regular rural carrier pursuant to MOU 6, was not eliminated by rural carriers’ voluntary bids to other vacancies within the district or within 100 miles, or was not eliminated for any other reason, the junior carrier(s) will be involuntarily reassigned to an office with an existing withheld residual rural route vacancy in accordance with Article 12.

Template RC – 5, Notice of Assignment to Impacted Regular Rural Carrier

i. When two or more regular carriers from the same impacted offices are being involuntarily reassigned, the senior regular carrier will have the first choice for reassignment to the identified residual rural route vacancies.

m. The carrier who is involuntarily reassigned to another office retains the seniority the carrier held at the impacted office for future vacancies at the new office and for retreat rights to future vacancies in the impacted office.

n. An involuntarily reassigned rural carrier may exercise retreat rights when a vacancy occurs at the original (impacted) office. Requests for retreat rights must be filed in writing at the time of reassignment.

o. The residual vacancies withheld in item j. above will be posted for bid only in the office with the vacancy if:

  - The excessing situation was eliminated in the office that caused the vacancy to be withheld, and

  - There are no other excessing situations within the district or within 100 miles or within 50 miles if proposing to convert a regular route evaluated to less than 35:00 hours, and

  - There is no other agreement between the parties, e.g., an MOU, which requires the vacancy to continue to be withheld.

3. Procedures Related to Conversion of Encumbered Regular Routes Evaluated Less Than 35:00 Standard Hours

Scenario 1

Regular route evaluated less than 35:00 hours is identified and there is a withheld residual vacancy in the same office.

Template RC-1A, Notice of Excessing with Existing Withheld Residual Vacancy is sent to the NRLCA District Representative.

Post withheld residual vacancy in the office. The residual vacancy will be assigned to a regular carrier in the office following the posting. The identified route will be converted to auxiliary status once it is vacated.

Scenario 2

Regular route evaluated less than 35:00 hours is identified and there is no withheld residual vacancy in the office.

Follow the excessing procedures, as identified above, beginning with the identification of a potential excessing situation. Continue with the procedures for posting vacancies within the district and within 100 miles of the identified impacted office. (See Article 12.3.C.1.b.)

If the excessing situation is not eliminated through job bidding and there is a withheld residual vacancy within 50 miles of the impacted office (pursuant to Article 12.3.C.2.c.), the excess regular rural carrier will be reassigned to the vacancy. The route vacated by the excess regular rural carrier will then be posted within the impacted office, if appropriate. Once it is vacated, the regular route less than 35:00 standard hours will automatically be converted to auxiliary status.

If the excessing situation is not eliminated through job bidding and there is a withheld residual vacancy within 50 miles of the impacted office (pursuant to the October 2, 2012 MOU re: DPS impact), the parties at the area level may agree to release the withheld vacancy for posting and subsequent reassignment of the excess regular rural carrier. The route vacated by the excess regular rural carrier will then be posted within the impacted office, if appropriate. Once it is vacated, the regular route less than 35:00 standard hours will automatically be converted to auxiliary status.

If the excessing situation is not eliminated through job bidding and there is no withheld residual vacancy within 50 miles of the impacted office, the excess rural carrier will not be reassigned. Management may, at this time or at any time in the future, begin the excessing process anew by providing proper notifica-
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sions and completing job postings in accordance with Article 12 and these guidelines.

4. Procedures Related to Consolidation of Encumbered Routes
   a. Consolidation of Encumbered Route in Offices With a Newly Vacant Route (Article 12.5.B.1.)
      1. When a route consolidation is pending, the appropriate NRLCA representative must be notified if a sixty (60) day extension in posting of the vacant route(s) is needed.
         Template RC-6, Notice to Extend Posting Period
      2. Prepare consolidation/adjustment package.
      3. Provide copy of PS Form 500, Rural Delivery Service Survey and interim evaluation worksheets to the affected carriers.
      4. Allow at least ten (10) days for affected carriers to submit comments and suggestions in writing.
      5. Complete consolidation/adjustment “on paper” – do not effect territorial changes.

   b. Consolidation of Encumbered Route Evaluated Less Than 37:00 Standard Hours (Article 12.5.B.2.) – Excess Regular Carrier
      1. Follow the guidelines for identifying the excessing situation and posting of rural route vacancies.
      2. Follow the consolidation procedures outline in 4.A.2 through 5 above.
      3. For consolidations that will result in an excess rural carrier, ensure that the adjustment package is reviewed at the area level.

      NOTE: In all instances the consolidation/conversion will only be implemented following the posting and awarding of the rural route assignments. The effective date of the Final Award (placement of the carriers into the bid-for assignments) will be the effective date of the consolidation (territorial changes).

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Mail Count Training Dates

Mail count training dates and locations are subject to change so please check the www.ohrlca.org website for the most current up to date information as more classes may be added or cancelled due to inclement weather. If weather is bad please call the library to see if they are still open.

Bring your 2012 September mail count guide or the September mail count guide printed in the September edition of the national rural letter carrier magazine.

Tuesday, January 8, 2013
Upper Arlington Public Library, 2800 Tremont Rd., Upper Arlington, OH 614-486-9621 6 p.m.-8 p.m.

Wednesday, January 9, 2013
Akron Holiday Inn, 4073 Medina Rd., Akron, OH 6 p.m.-9 p.m.
Tipp City Public Library, 11 East Main St., Tipp City, OH 937-667-3826 6 p.m.-8 p.m.

Thursday, January 10, 2013
Salem Public Library, 821 E. State St., Salem, OH 6 p.m.-8 p.m.
Chillicothe Public Library, 550 Buckeye St., Chillicothe, OH 740-702-4100 6 p.m.-8 p.m.

Wednesday, January 16, 2013
Bucyrus Public Library, 200 E. Mansfield St., Bucyrus, OH 6 p.m.-8 p.m.
Crossroads Branch Library, 63500 Byesville Rd., Cambridge, OH 740-432-7536 5:30 p.m.-7:30 p.m.
Symmes Township Branch Library, 11850 Enyart Rd., Loveland, OH 513-369-6001 6 p.m.-8 p.m.

Thursday, January 17, 2013
Putnam County Library, 136 Putnam Pkwy., Ottawa, OH 6 p.m.-8 p.m.
The Battle for the Post Office and Democracy
What sayeth the law?
Continued From December/January Issue

The large mailers will benefit by fewer places to drop their mailings, better opportunities to maximize work sharing discounts, increased competitive advantage over the smaller mailers, and the eventual conversion of union jobs to low wage jobs. Small businesses and non-profit organizations who drop off the mail at their local post office will have to travel much further to drop off their mail or pay more for postage. While the large commercial mailers will benefit economically from consolidation, the millions of people whose mail travels through these plants will then have second class service for a first class stamp.

Similarly, the large banks and other large corporations have long attempted to get rid of small post offices in violation of the law. The plan to reduce services at small and rural post offices also violates the laws regarding postal policy, which states,

(b) The Postal Service shall provide a maximum degree of effective and regular postal services to rural areas, communities, and small towns where post offices are not self-sustaining. No small post office shall be closed solely for operating at a deficit, it being the specific intent of the Congress that effective postal services be insured to residents of both urban and rural communities. (US Code, Title 39, Part 1)

Manufacturing the Financial Crisis to Justify Service Cuts and Closures

Citizens were able to slow many of the closures of local mail processing facilities and post offices with impressive community organizing efforts. The large mailers and key members of Congress next manufactured a financial crisis to provide a better excuse for reducing service and taking away living wage job opportunities for the American people.

In December of 2006, President George W. Bush signed the Postal Accountability and Enhancement Act (PAEA), passed by both Republicans and Democrats in Congress, which created the conditions for the current postal financial crisis by including the following changes in the law:

1. Required the Postal Service to pre-fund a Postal Service Retiree Health Benefits Fund for employees 75 years in advance. (Note: No other government service has this requirement)
2. Required the Postal Service to pre-fund the entire health care advance funding within a 10 year period, which meant approximately 5.5 billion would be removed from the funds normally dedicated to covering postal services each year.
3. Placed an inflation-based cap on price increases for postage of most types of mail.

Representing the American Postal Workers Union (APWU), President Bill Burrus objected to the bill prior to its passage contending in part that the cap on most postage rates would put a cap on wages for workers and would undermine service to the public. However, the PAEA passed on a voice vote, thus without a record of each legislator’s vote. Many who advocated and voted for the harmful changes in PAEA are still in office today.

The effects of the PAEA changes were seen immediately when the first payment for the retiree health care fund came due and increasingly so over the subsequent years. The unreasonable pre-funding schedule of the retiree health care fund has put a serious financial strain on the USPS and has thus lent false credibility to the notion that the Post Office is failing. There is currently in excess of 44 billion in the retiree health care fund set aside for possible retirees not even born yet. The large advertisers and their supporters in Congress such as Representative Darrell Issa, a Republican from California, are taking advantage of this manufactured crisis to ignore postal policy law and push for rapid facility and service changes that would significantly accelerate the dismantling and transformation of the Postal Service under the guise of “saving” the Post Office.

Owners of Large Corporations Lobby For Postal Service Cuts and No Increase in Their Postage Rates

The Coalition for a 21st Century Postal Service was created in 2004 as the public friendly name for the large mailer association that previously identified themselves more honestly as The Mailer’s Council. Notable members of this wealthy large mailer coalition include: Time Warner (People Magazine, Sports Illustrated, CNN, etc.), Bank of America, American Express, Pitney Bowes, and AT&T.

“Currently numbering twenty-five associations and companies, the 21st Century Coalition encompasses mailers and suppliers making up the heart of what is still a $1 trillion industry that generates 7.5 million jobs during this deep recession. Our members, and their customers, use every class, service and product of the postal system....

Restructuring/Facilities Closings. The Postal Service needs to have free rein to manage the system as its business declines. We urge Congress to not inhibit the changes postal management deems essential to align the system with decreases in volume, shifts to less expensive mail (i.e., changes in the “mail mix”),” and the reduction in revenues both entail. In this regard, the Coalition supports closing underutilized post offices and other dedicated postal facilities, yet making access to postal products and services more ubiquitous by offering them in supermarkets and other outlets more convenient to more Americans. Similarly, we support streamlining processing networks and facilities to match the needs of projected volumes....

The Coalition urgently reminds one and all that mailers and suppliers – again, those who pay USPS’ bills -- are at least as challenged financially as USPS. They simply cannot afford, and therefore will oppose, any rate increase. (Source - Coalition for a 21st Century Postal Service Letter to Senators Lieberman, Carper, Collins, and McCain 3/26/10)

The large mailers like to tout the number of jobs controlled in the private sector related to the mailing industry. However, they do not tout the low wages and benefits they pay their private sector workers doing postal work. Some of the better known companies listed in this particular letter, who claim they, “are as financially challenged as USPS,” include: American Express, AT&T, Pitney Bowes, Time Warner, and Verizon. They are replacing family wage jobs with low wage jobs and keeping the profit.

The Coalition for a 21st Century Postal Service continued with their message of no increases in their postage rates, worked to get smaller businesses to buy in, and utilized threats of taking their business elsewhere.

“I am [position] of [company name]. We depend on the postal system and support [X] jobs right here in [name of town]. We are very concerned about the Postal Service’s financial problems, and urge you to help get them back on their feet. But we are even more concerned with proposals to increase postal rates not to support USPS, but to reduce the deficit. Our business simply cannot afford an increase; the consequences would be devastating for us.” (Source – Coalition for a 21st Century Postal Service Message Points for Grassroots Communication 9/28/11)

“The U.S. mailing industry today reiterated its position that the industry will oppose any Postal reform legislation that includes a proposal by the U.S. Postal Service to increase postage rates. The Coalition for a 21st Century Postal Service, a coalition comprising industries that rely on the mail, warned that postage increases will drive more customers away from the mail and hasten the demise of the U.S. Postal Service.” (Source – Coalition for a 21st Century Postal Service press release dated 3/22/12)

The large mailers make their objections to the rate increase known, because raising the rates on the large advertisers is a logical choice to ensure service to the American public. Also, it is simply their fair share of the cost. According to many advertisers, mail, because it can be targeted at a specific individual based on collected data, provides the best return on the investment for advertisers.

Will Be Continued In February/March Issue
As of October 25, 2012 the Membership Analysis prepared by the National Office has Ohio’s total membership at 4131. On November 12, 2012 the total membership in Ohio is 4144. This is the first increase in membership for our state since 2009. The contributing factor to the increase is, new hires that may become bargaining members, RCAs. We need to continue our efforts to recruit new members. If your office has received a new RCA recruit them to become a member of the NRLCA. The 1187 is available on the ohrlca.org website.

The 2012 election is over, I hope you exercised your American right and voted. Maybe your candidate was victorious, or maybe not, the fact is the votes were counted and the will of the people won. We now need to unite and support the issues before us as rural carriers. Contact your legislators let them know six-day mail delivery is the right choice for America.

Open Season began November 12th and will end on December 10, 2012. Review your Federal Health Benefit Program and make your changes on liteblue.gov.

On November 17, 2012 the National Steward System will begin. The National Stewards will be assigned as per numbers of routes. Because Ohio is the sixth (6th) largest state association in number of routes, Ohio will increase with Joanna Lapinta additional stewards under the new national steward system.

During the 2011 National Convention a dues increased was passed to fund the new steward system, the dues increase will also begin on November 17th. There are 48 state association in the NRLCA, Ohio is the sixth (6) largest in membership and is tenth (10th) in dues charged to members.

The following is the break down of the increase and total deducted per pay period.

- Regular Carrier increase $8.81 making their dues a total of $25.27 per pay period
- PTF Carrier increase $8.81 making their dues a total of $25.27 per pay period
- Relief Carrier increase $3.08 making their dues a total of $9.00 per pay period
- Retired Members there is no change to your dues withholdings. If you received a notice from OPM stating your dues have changed, it was in error. The National Office imported the data incorrectly; the correction amount will be deducted in December.

Members on OWCP or extended LWOP, after three pay periods of not paying dues you are no longer a “member in good standing”. You, cannot be nominated as a delegate to the State or National Convention, your membership will cease. If you have The Rural Carrier Health Benefit Plan your insurance coverage will stop. To continue your benefits contact me at 330-735-2727 to continue your membership.

On Veterans Day I hope you remembered the men and women who served to keep our country free. Remember the troopers away from home and donate items to assist in their needs.

At Thanksgiving I hope you gave thanks for your many blessings, and that you live in a country where you have freedom of speech and religion.

Celebrate the true meaning of Christmas and give to those who are not as fortunate.

May the warm glow of Merry Christmas be with you and may you have a Happy and Prosperous New Year.

Penny Koren
Legislative Report: Committeeman Edler reported he has traveled about 3000 miles to all of the mailcount and district meetings. During the District Meetings he presented petitions to eliminate the overfunding for retirees benefits and retain six-day delivery. Meeting attendees signed the petitions and Committeeman Edler sent the petitions to Congressional representatives.

GMAC: Committeeman Pitts received a packet from GMAC Insurance. The packet included new flyers encouraging members to request a quote for all of their insurance needs.

Provident Guild: Committeeman Dedden will be sending information to the Training Academies to encourage new hires to join provident guild after they become a member.

New Business: Committeeman Pitts made a motion to appoint four new Area Stewards, the motion passed.

Old Business: Committeeman Pitts made a motion to increase dues to fund the National Steward System will begin November 17, 2012. The OHRLCA Constitution Change to Article 10 will become effective on November 17, 2012.

Spring Booster Meeting: Secretary-Treasurer Koren made a motion to table the spring booster /retirement seminar pending the availability of the retirement specialist, the motion passed.

State Steward Report: State Steward Hutchison reported that mailcount grievances are being filed. Mailcount results, 75% of Ohio’s Rural Routes evaluation remained the same or increased. Loss in evaluation was contributed to a route which receives DPS letters and has a government assigned vehicle. Over all the mail volume has increased.

Training for the new Area Stewards was held and three of the four carriers attended.

The past year grievance files have been separated as per the new National Steward Districts. The newly appointed National Stewards have received some equipment from the National Office.

PAC: PAC was represented at each district meeting and mailcount training, it has been exhausting but worth the outcome. Because of your PAC contributions your representatives are aware you care and they are listening.

PAC Chairman Aitchison requested the Board to support a raffle with the prize of $1000 to be drawn at the Spring Meeting. He has also requested the Board to sponsor a PAC mailing in November.

Committeeman Dedden made a motion to fund a mailing announcing a PAC Raffle with a prize of $1000 to include members and non-members to be drawn at our Spring Meeting, the motion passed.

Committeeman Pitts made a motion to donate the NRLCA Pocket calendars to PAC to be sold for $3.00 donation, motion passed.

Committeeman Pitts made a motion to adjourn, the motion passed.

8:00pm Adjournment

Next board meeting: January 28-30, 2013 12:30pm
Westlake Holiday Inn
1100 Crocker Rd., Westlake OH 44145
ROLLS ROYCE, NO, NO!

Did that wealthy customer that you give extra special service to give you a used Rolls Royce? Well guess what, you must say thanks but I can’t accept it. What about that other customer that likes to give you a $50 bill, here again you can’t accept it. It is against postal policy! But you say, I give them good service all year long and deliver their parcels directly to the door and even wrap them when the weather is bad. This is your JOB and the postal service pays you a good salary for doing your job. Gift cards are fine to accept as long as their value isn’t over $20. Of course, you may accept homemade goodies like cookies, candy any kind of nuts.

This is the official Postal Service Tipping Policy: Limits: Postal employees may not accept CASH, or anything that has a cash value of over $20. Permitted gifts: food; refreshments that are not meal related; personal gifts from personal friends and family members; gifts and discounts available to the public and all government employees. Ethical considerations: In general federal employees are forbidden from accepting any gifts that may in any way conflict with or alter the normal performance of their work. They must place public service above private gain. There you have it, so sorry to say but you will have to give back that beautiful car and those golf clubs, and don’t forget those $50 bills.

Just a reminder, if you haven’t called GMAC for a quote on your car insurance, please do it today. They know the rural craft and the Tort Claims Act, they are truly our best friend out there. Their number is: 1-877-274-9605 and use code R-PD.

I wish you all a Happy Thanksgiving and a very Merry Christmas. May you all be safe and your families enjoy the festivities together.

Barb Pitts-Committeeman

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We had a very informative Fall Booster Meeting. I’m sorry if you were not able to attend. Tim and Sandy Gartner, representing NARFE. Penny Koren, spoke about CSRS, and Barbara Pitts, spoke about FERS. We had informative handouts about both the CSRS and FERS Retirement. I am in the process of reading mine. It is never too early to prepare to retire.

In the past issues I have stated that I felt more secure about using the mail to pay my bills and do my banking. Vice President Gamble presented a video about Computer Security: "How Safe Are We?" After seeing it, I am more convinced that the mail is much safer and the video showed a very good argument for the mail service.

Floyd Edler brought us up to date about legislative issues and reminded us that we need to keep in touch with Representatives and Senators to protect our jobs.

We had a duck race and as usual, I purchased the slowest duck. It was the last in the race. Erik felt sorry for me and gave me a quarter for last place. Thanks Erik.

In my last article, I presented information about health insurances and FSA. The open season for FEHB began on Nov. 12 and ends on December 10th of 2012. FSA began on November 12th and ends on December 23rd of 2012.

I would like to extend a Happy Thanksgiving, Merry Christmas, and Happy New Year and may we remember those who do not have family close by or those who are in need. There are angel trees at most malls for children that we may be able to help and bring a well needed smile to their faces. The food banks in most areas are in need to make holiday baskets. Let us share with others if we can.

Best wishes to all in the New Year.

Committeeperson

Barb Perkins was the winner of the duck race at the fall booster meeting.

Executive Committeeman Barb Pitts delivering holiday cheer.
SAFETY DEPENDS ON “YOU”

The title of my article “Safety Depends on You” is a motto that all rural carriers must adhere to when they are working in the office or working on their route. Our job entails a lot of safety issues in the office from lifting heavy trays and tubs and parcels to pushing extremely heavy carts; etc. We are required by postal regulations to be able to lift 70 pounds. When lifting from the floor, bend your knees, keep your back straight, and make sure you have a good grip on the item that you are lifting. Pick up straps and tags off the floor to prevent any slips, trips, or falls. Push your cart and never pull your cart. Respect your fellow rural carrier by putting your equipment in its proper location after use. Caution must be used when floors are wet due to rainy or snowy days.

During this time of the season, the weather can be anything but cooperative. Please keep your safety and the safety of others in mind when you are out on your route. Driving your LLV or POV on the route requires 150 percent of your attention. Road conditions can change hourly. From leaves to rain to sleet to hale to snow and on top of that wind, can cause these hourly changes in road conditions. SAFETY DEPENDS ON YOU and your quick and accurate reactions to these changes. Proper driving techniques is what all rural carriers must follow. Your tires need to be checked regularly for tread; your windshield wipers for clearance; proper working of vehicle lights; proper operation of your horn; brakes stop on a dime; etc. Remember to report all Joanna Lapinta LLV maintenance needs on PS 4565, Vehicle Repair Tag and repair any safety maintenance on your POV in a timely manner.

When dismounting on your route during this uncooperative seasonal weather, take extreme caution. Slips, trips, and falls can occur when you least expect them. Be alert to your surroundings when walking. Leaves are very slippery when wet or dry. Wet and/or snowy and/or ice covered walkways, roadways, and yards cause for extreme caution. Make sure your tread on your boots or tennis shoes are not worn. Keeping our feet warm and dry will make walking in inclement weather more tolerable.

Safety Depends on You!

Carla Dedden, Executive Committeeman

PAC Stats

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This article was very close to being a reprint of last year’s article concerning the PAC Stats as broken down by district! Once again, District 2 takes the top honors in both aggregate total and per capita total. Congratulations to all of the regular rural carriers, retired rural carriers, and rural relief carriers in District 2.

As it was last year, District 12 is second in the aggregate total, but has cut the difference between them and District 2 immensely!

And again as it was last year, District 4 comes in second in per capita total. The lead in this category is not as great as it was last year either; don’t look back District 2!

Congratulations to all regular rural carriers, all retired rural carriers, and all rural relief carriers of this great state of Ohio!

This period of time between the election and when the elected are sworn in in February is known as the “lame duck” session. It looks like there will be no comprehensive postal reform legislation put forth during this time period, but Rep. Issa is making an effort. In February, there will be a few new players in the game, but for the most part, there is very little substantive change in the rosters. It will be then that Congress will direct their gaze in our direction.

We, as Rural Letter Carriers, need to be vigilante and know where our representatives stand on our issues. Regardless of what their stand is on our issues, let us make sure they know what OUR stand is on our issues.

Watch for the Spring Raffle tickets coming soon. If you need extras, contact me or a State Board member! Buy them for your friends and family!

Michael D. Aitchison
Cherished mother of Thomas J. Gamble (wife, Cindy), Susan Gamble and Richard H. Gamble (wife, Diane). Precious grandmother of Ryan Thomas (wife, Victoria), Mara Rae and Megan Maureen. Dear sister of Lois Schuenske.
Gloria was the accompanist for the choral program at Lola Valley/Hilbert Junior High for 40 years, a job she loved. She impacted many lives in her tenure and gave the gift of music to many students there, as well as to the piano students she taught later in life. Her love of music was shared with everyone she knew, and passed on to her family.
She was an active member of Metropolitan Methodist Church for many years, where she made many close and life-long friendships. She could be seen every Sunday in the alto section of the church choir. She was also a member of the Metrolite Class and the Rice Circle. Her devotion to her family was the cornerstone of her life, and she provided for them well and passed on her belief in charity, kindness and compassion, as well as the importance of keeping a sense of humor. She will be missed by all those who have known and loved her, but her spirit will live on in the lives of the people she's touched.

Robert L. Volkert, 80, of Hicksville, died Monday, September 17, 2012 at Community Memorial Hospital, Hicksville.
He was born on February 18, 1932 in Hicksville, the son of Guy and Opal Volkert.
Bob was a 1950 graduate of Hicksville High School.
On August 18, 1962, he was united in marriage to Marlene Goss and she preceded him in death.
Bob served his country in the U.S. Army during the Korean War.
He was a rural mail carrier for 11 years and was a lifelong farmer.
Bob was a member of the First Presbyterian Church in Hicksville, Northeast Indiana Two Cylinder Club, Masonic Lodge #478 of Hicksville, Northwesternaires Barbershop Chorus and a lifetime member of the VFW.
He is survived by his son Michael (Bridgett Watson) Volkert of Hicksville; a daughter Vicki (Roger) Gatchell of Leo, Indiana; granddaughters- Katy, Allison, Olivia, Abby Gatchell; a sister El-Jane (Dennis) Stuckey of Hicksville and a brother Jim (Donna) Volkert of Delaware, Ohio.
Preceding Bob in death were his parents and his wife.

Robert E. Husted, 85, of Hicksville, died Thursday, September 13, 2012 at his son’s home in Hicksville, Ohio.
Born on December 14, 1926 in Hicksville, Ohio, he was the son of the late Hugh and Bessie (Richardson) Husted.
He was a 1944 graduate of Hicksville High School.
Robert served his country in the U.S. Navy in WWII in Naples, Italy.
He was a rural mail carrier and a farmer. He was a member of the First Presbyterian Church, EAA, Farm Bureau Council and “The Office” at McDonalds.
Robert is survived by his son Dean (Judy) of Hicksville, grandchildren Kaity, Tyan and Thomas Husted, brothers Richard (Fran) of Greenwich, CT and David (Phyllis) of Ann Arbor, MI.
He was preceded in death by his parents and his wife.

Diane Salmon, 62, of Coventry Township was returned home to the Lord on October 22, 2012. Diane was born on May 3rd, 1950 to Charles and Lettie Merle Smith at Fort Bragg in Fayetteville, NC. Diane passed away while surrounded with her family.
Diane was preceded in death by her sister, Helen Knotek. She is survived by her husband of 39 years, Don; son, Jon (Anne); daughter, Melissa Albright; granddaughters, Katie and Mira; parents, Charles and Lettie Merle; and sister, Pam (Ron) Cook. Diane married Don in 1973 while he was serving in the U.S. Army. While Don was active duty, Diane would volunteer at the Red Cross and other non-profit organizations. Diane was a rural letter carrier with the United States Postal Service for 22 years. She retired from the postal service in 2011. During her years at USPS, Diane served as State Steward in Ohio and Task Force 1 for the National Rural Letter Carriers Association. Prior to the USPS, Diane was a prominent real estate agent while living in Columbia, SC.
Diane was known for taking care of a variety of animals. She had adopted numerous pets over the years including: tropical birds, injured wild animals, such as rabbits, squirrels and birds, as well as dogs, cats, chickens, and fish. Her hobbies included tennis, walking in parks, cooking, macramé, occasionally gambling, but mainly focused on strong family values.
She was a dedicated wife and mother and a loved daughter, sister, and grandmother. Diane loved spoiling her young granddaughters whenever given the opportunity.

Auxiliary members hard at work at fall booster meeting.
Auxiliary Officers

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President: Abby Hausfeld
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VP: Riley Hausfeld
733 Oakwood Drive, Minster, OH 45865
Secretary : Samantha Fernandez,
Defiance, OH 43512
Treasurer: Nate Hausfeld,
733 Oakwood Drive, Minster, OH 45865

Recent Retirees
Stephen J Skrinjar
Marilyn J McDowell
Linda M Schwarzman
Russell E Root
Steve R Schleeter
Cynthia L Thompson
Sandra K Cutlip
Deborah K Gordon
Charleston
Judith A Lamont
George W Lang
Jill L Lipscomb
Donna J Otto
Margie L Ringold
Tim A Wilson
Lisa A Kellett
Jeffrey E Parr
Donald R Kiper
Larry L Pew
Tom D See
George Spears Jr
Janice L Becker
Sharon L Sanders
Alva Gailbreath
Kevin K Kuhn
East Liverpool
McComb
Creston
Mineral Ridge
Van Wert
Zanesville
Springfield
South
Powell
South Point
Middleport
Beallsville
Mansfield
Reynoldsburg
Greenfield
Wooster
Warsaw
Galloway
Wakeman
Wellington
Waynesfield
Cadiz
Celina

PRESIDENT
KAY CARTER'S
2012-2013 AUXILIARY
PROGRAM OF WORK

PROJECT: dEBra:"Epidermolysis Bullosa" EB
MOTTO: "Until there's a cure...there's dEBra"
SYMBOL: Butterfly-Mailbox
AMERICANISM: The American Flag
SONG: "God Bless America"
SAFETY: "Be Alert-Be Aware-Be Safe"
FLOWER: Mixed Flower Bouquet
SONG: "How Great Thou Art"
INSPIRATION: "The best and most beautiful things in the world cannot be seen or even
touched. They must be felt with the heart."

-Helen Keller
UPCOMING EVENTS

Board Meeting
January 28, 29, 30, 2013
Westlake Holiday Inn
1100 Crocker Rd
Westlake OH 44145
12:30 p.m.

State Convention
July 14-16, 2013
Westlake Holiday Inn
1100 Crocker Rd.
Westlake, OH 44145

National Convention
August 13-16, 2013
St. Louis, Missouri

All dates and times are subject to change due to unexpected events. Please check our website OHRLCA.org for changes to this schedule and the most current date information.

SPOTLIGHT PAGE

Every issue we would like to have a Spotlight Page. Anyone knowing of a person or post office they feel should be spotlighted please send information to: Editor Lori Todd at loritodd@yahoo.com.

DEADLINE

for the February/March issue is January 12, 2013. Please have all articles to Editor Lori Todd by that date.

You May Have Won A Prize

Please See This Page for Details!
Karen B. Phillips found her name in the last issue.
Congratulations Karen!

CONTEST

Every issue of the Ohio Rural Letter Carrier will contain a name of a member in the body of one of the board members articles. Find your name in the article and win a $25 Visa Voucher from Atlanta Postal Credit Union. The name will be placed where it makes no sense (example: The USPS is a great place loritodd to work). Contact Penny Koren at 330-735-2727 to claim your prize.

Karen B. Phillips found her name in the last issue. She received a $25 Visa Voucher. Congratulations Karen!