

The Twig of the Branch



Branch 1477 West Coast Florida Letter Carriers



Serving:

**St. Petersburg — Largo — Dunedin — Pinellas Park — Indian Rocks Beach
Punta Gorda — Englewood — Bradenton Beach — Palmetto — Ellenton**

VOLUME 613

VOICE OF BRANCH 1477

DECEMBER, 2020

NOTICE:

As printed in the October and November Twigs, nominations were taken at the November 12th General Membership Meeting for Delegates to the FSALC Convention in 2021. As reported in the Minutes of the October 8th Membership Meeting, the Finance Committee recommended sending up to 25 Delegates and a motion to accept that recommendation was made and passed.

The result of the review of the Nominees for Delegate are as follows:

33 members were nominated; several Nominees had insufficient meetings, 2 Nominee's expenses are paid by the Region and/or State, and 1 Nominee declined. This left the Branch with 24 Delegates.

Because this is below the cap of the Finance Committee's recommendation of 25 delegates, an *election is not necessary*.



**Happy Holidays From
Joe, Chris, Zulma, TC
and the Executive Board**



NEXT BRANCH MEETING HELD VIA ZOOM: THURSDAY, DECEMBER 10, 2020

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PRESIDENT'S REPORT

By President Joe Henschen

Twitter @JaHe1

CCAs Rights and Benefits

Two of the biggest rights afforded City Carrier Assistants allow for vacation planning in the "Choice" period and Opting for duty assignments that become vacant for 5 days or more.

Article 30 of the National Agreement,

provides for 22 Items that can be discussed locally. The Local Memorandum (LMOU) for all of our cities may add to the National Agreement's rules but may not contradict them. After the signing of each National Agreement a 30-Day period is announced to provide for local negotiations.

A great deal of the LMOU includes 8 sections all dealing with the formulation of the local leave program. The development of the local leave programs are a result of arbitration decisions or local negotiations, although these provisions haven't gone through many changes since 1997. The only real changes in any of the Branch 1477's LMOUs were made to address the leave selections of the City Carrier Assistants as they entered the Craft.

CCA Annual Leave during the Choice Vacation Period:

CCA employees shall be granted up to ten (10) days of continuous Annual Leave during the Choice Vacation Period. The Installation Head shall meet with the representative of the Union prior to the first day of submission for Choice Vacation Leave to determine the amount of Annual Leave accumulated by each Part Time Flexible and CCA as well as to project the potential Annual Leave accrual during the appointment period of each CCA. They shall determine the projected eligibility dates that each CCA employee will have sufficient leave balance to take a single block of Annual Leave during the Choice Vacation Period consisting of units of either five (5) or ten (10) working days, the total not exceeding the ten (10) days.

The granting of previously approved Annual Leave is contingent upon the projection that the CCA will have an adequate balance to support the approved request when the Annual Leave is used. In any case of previously approved Annual Leave request of a single selection consisting of the (10) working days in which the CCA does not have a sufficient Annual Leave balance available at the time the leave is to be taken, the CCA shall be granted a single selection of five (5) working days at their option within the previously approved ten (10) working day period provided they have a sufficient Annual Leave balance for the leave, at the time the leave is to be taken. The CCA leave cancellation policy shall be the same process as the career leave cancellation procedure.

CCA employees converted to career status during a leave year shall retain any Annual Leave previously approved period. Converted CCAs choosing to take approved Choice Leave will be allowed to take the time (having been paid out the terminal balance of their CCA leave account) unpaid when the period falls in the 90 -day period of conversion. See Article 10.2 of the National Agreement.

In a nutshell: PTFs and CCAs earn Annual Leave as the year progresses. All Regular employees are advanced the leave at the beginning of the Leave Year. Over the next few weeks during the "Choice" Period in most Offices, Full Time Regular Career employees by seniority will choose when they want to take a vacation in 2021. After the FTRs and PTFs select, PTRs select from the remaining periods available. Then the CCAs will select. CCAs will be granted 5 or 10 day blocks of leave when it is projected that they will have

enough “earned” leave for the 5 or 10 days.

All employees should see a schedule of when it will be you will select leave. In most cities you will get 3 days to make your selection.

With one exception, in all Branch 1477 cities, all Craft Employees select from leave slots created by calculating 14% of the total number of employees in each delivery unit.

The only exception is in the Pinellas Park Installation where CCAs create their own category and may select from any week not filled by the Regular Carriers selections.

Eight of the Branch cities begin selection on November 10, with only Bradenton Beach and Palmetto select in December.

Opting and Hold-downs

CCAs with 60-Days from the date of appointment are eligible to opt. Opting is a procedure, called “opting” allows carriers including CCAs, to “hold down” vacant duty assignments of regular carriers who are on leave or otherwise unable to work for five or more days. Opts are called hold-downs because the opting letter carrier is said to be “holding down” the assignment until the regular returns or a regular is assigned to the vacancy on a permanent basis.

Requests for the opt should be made in writing (keep a copy of the request). Requests are approved by Seniority and then Relative Standing. If no eligible career employee has requested the opt, the available CCA with the highest relative standing who submits a request will be awarded the opt or hold-down.

An employee with an opt is entitled to the hours of the opt, but not necessarily the days off of the position. Opts do give some routine to the CCA position. In our LMOUs there are provisions for “bumping” opting employees from the assignment when a regular is scheduled to work an NS day. When a regular bumps a Carrier Technician (T6) or a T6 is scheduled to work an NS, The T6 should be assigned to a vacant duty assignment on his/her swing. If there are no vacancies the T6 may then bump the opting employee from the assignment for the day. The opt continues the next scheduled workday. If there are two routes with opted employees, the T6 must bump the junior carrier.

In most of the Branch there is no defined procedure for the posting of opts. The leave calendar, once the

selection period is done, has the most information on when an opt is available.

The right to opt is important, if you are not allowed to consistently work your hold-down, get your steward involved.



Hubble's Troubles

*By Executive Vice President,
Chris Hubble*

“We do these things not because they are easy but because they are hard” -JFK

It has been a difficult year to say the least. The effects of the COVID-19 pandemic and staffing levels has made our work as letter carriers more demanding physically and mentally. But through it all, letter carriers have delivered to the American people. Delivering mail and packages that are so vital to families and businesses. Letter carriers have had to work through social distancing, Expedited Street/Afternoon Sortation (ESAS) and working over 12 hours in a single workday and more than 60 hours in a workweek just to name a few.

All the while, shop stewards have had an additional challenge. To date, stewards have processed and appealed over 720 grievances and the year is not even over. Stewards have had to navigate through the Families First Coronavirus Act (FFCRA) to ensure that employees were being paid when off due to COVID related issues. Filing overtime grievances, many times doing so even when denied information and steward time to process the grievances.

A handful of our stewards are new and figuring out how to do things they have never done and committing to doing them as well as they can possibly be done. Shop stewards are the foot soldiers in the NALC's efforts to enforce the National Agreement. Stewards are letter carriers first and whenever management fails to provide a letter carrier with what he or she is entitled to under the National Agreement, the steward is the first to handle the problem. “The shop steward is the person to start with. Talk to your steward if you have an issue, no matter how large or small the issue may be,” Rolando said. Sometimes problems

are resolved without the letter carriers involved even knowing about it. "When a steward goes to a manager and fixes a problem, or a potential problem, just by informing the manager of the situation or reminding the manager of what the contract requires, sometimes that's enough," said Rolando. "The issue gets nipped in the bud, and letter carriers down the line may never have to deal with the problem in the first place."

All letter carriers, including CCAs, have rights under the National Agreement, and all letter carriers should ask a steward to enforce those rights if they have been violated or denied. If other attempts to resolve a dispute or correct a contract violation fail, the steward may decide a grievance is necessary. The process gives each letter carrier an opportunity to have his or her voice heard when management violates letter carrier rights under the National Agreement. The National Agreement requires grievances be filed within 14 days of when the contract violation took place, so be sure to talk to your steward as soon as possible after you become aware of a problem. (Emphasis added) "Your best chance for a successful grievance is to give your steward all the information you have and whatever else he or she needs to build a solid case," Rolando said. "Don't hold anything back for any reason. Help your steward make the best case for you." Many shop stewards became stewards after seeing the success of the grievance process and wanting to help their fellow letter carriers. "Increased knowledge and understanding of the grievance process among all letter carriers will only make the process more successful going forward and get more letter carriers interested in serving as shop stewards in the future." Rolando said.

If we keep our attention focused on the present, we can be sure of one thing, that whatever we are attending to do in this moment will change. -Jon Kabat-Zinn



Editor's Corner

***By Editor/Webmaster,
Judy Dorris***

The phrase "20/20 hindsight" does not refer to a calendar year, but is used to describe the fact that it is easy for one to be knowledgeable about an event after it has happened.

I think it is safe to assume that almost everyone of us has 20/20 hindsight about the year **2020**. We commonly tell everyone "Have a safe, healthy and happy New Year". This year that will have a stronger meaning. The best thing that can happen to 2020 is for it to be over.

There will not be an issue of the Twig in January. There is a Jan/Feb issue and you should receive it around the 3rd week of January.

Please check the website @ **branch1477nalc.org** for an updated list of our Veterans throughout the branch. If you do not see your name listed, please contact the Branch office as we would like to recognize and thank all members who have served for their service.

Correction:

In the Sad Report of November's Twig, we printed the wrong name of Matt Kennedy's Father. His Father's first name is John.



Retiree Update

***By Director of Retiree Affairs,
O.D. Elliott***

In January of this year, Federal retirees and Social Security recipients received a cost of living increase (COLA) of 1.6%. It was just recently announced that the 2021 COLA will only be 1.3%, slightly less than this year's increase. This 1.3% increase will become effective in January 2021.

You need to be aware that with this 1.3% increase in pensions and Social Security, there will be some offsetting by increases in Health Benefit premiums and Medicare premiums.

As far as Health Benefit premiums are concerned, the retirees cost for NALC High option, self and family will increase by \$21.55, from \$408.94 to \$430.49. The NALC High option, self only will increase by \$8.05, from \$196.82 to \$205.47. Medicare Part B premiums will increase by \$3.90, from \$144.60 to \$148.50.

Again, the NALC Health Benefits plans "High option Self plus one" makes no sense for retirees,

since the premiums will be greater than "High option Self and Family".

For our retirees who have Health Benefit plans other than NALC, you can find your rates for 2021 by going on line **to Government Employees Health Benefit premiums for 2021 and scrolling to OPM Premiums and then click onto FFS (Fee for Service/Nationwide Plans).** As a retiree, your premiums will be listed under "non-Postal Rates."

Auxiliary 181 News

By Dottie Tutt-Hutchinson

By now, most Letter Carriers and CCAs have seen the flyer about our 2 holiday baskets raffle. The loaded baskets are on display in the Union Hall until December 10th when 2 lucky one's names will be drawn. Tickets are only \$1, with the proceeds going to local Postal workers who are having a difficult financial time due to illness or loss of work. Thank you to Branch 1477 and the Post Office for endorsing this venture. And, a special thanks to our Auxiliary members who continuously donate the supplies and money to fill the baskets.

Remember to let Union officers, shop stewards, or Auxiliary members know if you or a fellow Carrier could use a little extra help this holiday season. All names are kept confidential.

Besides all the volunteer work Sandy Hart does for Hospice, we found out that Joyce Keller donates food and supplies to Ready For Life, another worthwhile nonprofit organization. Goods are needed for new "graduates" of the foster care system in Pinellas County. These 18 year old young adults are no longer supported by the government program, their foster parents, and are out on their own. Needless to say, they need as much help as we can give them. Please consider donating or volunteering for RFL.

December 2, noon, meeting at Joyce's home.
December 6, 4:00 Christmas party at Joyce's home.

Well wishes go to Lorie Davenport who spent 3 days in the hospital getting her gall bladder out, after a severe attack in the middle of the night.

Best wishes to all, during the holiday season. Be safe, take care, and happy, healthy 2021.

Minutes of November 12, 2020 Membership Meeting



Meeting called to order at 7:00 p.m. by President Joe Henschen.

Invocation by: O.D. Elliott

Pledge of Allegiance: led by President Joe Henschen.

Minutes of previous meeting: (not enough members present for a quorum)

Reading of Official Correspondence: by Ken Grasso: None

New Members: None

Branch by the Numbers: No Report

I would like to welcome Kelly Benz from Absolute Quality Interpreting Services LLC.

Treasurer: Chuck Cavicchio- President Henschen read the checkbook balances.

Director of Retiree Affairs: O.D. Elliott—Last 6 weeks has been helping with Labor 2020. On January 17th there will be a Retirement Seminar from 1:00 –3:00 on Zoom.

Director of Insurance: Tom Phillips—Open Season now until December 9. They are doing some webinar at different times providing information about the NALC Health Benefit Plan.

Political District 13 Liaison: Tom Phillips—No Report.

Political District 15 Liaison: Gene Carroll—No Report.

Trustee Report: Willie Cochran—Trustees met and audited the books for August and September.

Sergeant at Arms: Clay Hansen—No Report.

Editor/Webmaster: Judy Dorris—No Report

Vice President Report: Zulma Betancourt—Excused

Executive Vice President: Chris Hubble—Thanks to everyone for doing a great job in all that's happened with us lately.

Welfare Reports:

Sad:

- Randy Stefanick, Seminole—Sister passed away.
- Bob Brown, Madeira Beach—Underwent a knee replacement surgery.
- Alex Toth, Retiree Largo—has been diagnosed with cancer.
- O.D. Elliott, Retiree—Took a fall while jogging.
- John Phelps, Retired Manager in St. Petersburg—Mother passed away.
- Eric Short, Largo—Had shoulder surgery.

Glad:

Alex Toth, Birth of 2nd Great Grand Child

Congratulations to Sheldon Jones being elected to the City of Palmetto City Council.

Presidents Report:

President Henschen welcomed RAA Region 9 Don Lyerly who greeted everyone and said a few words on Zoom.

Nominations for 2021 State Convention will be taken during this General Membership Meeting. Finance Committee has recommended sending up to 25 Delegates and those attending Training at a cost of \$14,121.25 not to exceed \$20,000.

The members whose names were placed in nomination and whose names were picked by random drawing will appear on the ballot in the following order.

1. Chuck Cavicchio 2. Harry Nieves 3. Ken Grasso 4. Tom Phillips 5. Judy Dorris 6. Tiffany Naughton 7. O.D. Elliott 8. Shiela Bradley 9. Rudy Betancourt 10. Brian Andrews 11. Donny DeMila 12. Willie Cochran 13. Joe Rudolph 14. Denise Clark 15. Chris Hubble 16. Alicia Gary 17. Jim Grazioso 18. Alan Pollard 19. Clay Hansen 20. Sam Haddad 21. Sandra Pagan 22.

Anthony Roger 23. Chris Kotonski 24. Albert Carroll 25. Bert Lewis 26. Joe Henschen 27. Tanya Lee 28. Zulma Betancourt 29. Sheldon Jones 30. Devonne Grant 31. Don Lyerly 32. Anne Winkelbauer 33. Patrick Jacques.

WebEx Training was attended by Steward Shiela Bradley, Brian Andrews and President Henschen. The subject was OWCP and was informative for the members who attended.

Steward laptop computers were purchased and 2 have been released to 2 Stewards for immediate use.

Covid-19 update: Spike in the numbers in the Suncoast District. 596 total cases. Thanksgiving coming up soon please keep everyone safe in your families.

Parcel Overflow Tool is interesting new software being looked at. It is intended to dial in on the base parcels credited to each route.

Intervention has been approved and dates are pending because of the storm we had.

Update on Negotiations took place with some meetings with letter carriers explaining about the job requirements and how it has changed.

Christmas Penalty Overtime exclusion for 2020 begins 11/28/20 and ends 12/25/20.

Ladies Auxiliary doing a raffle with tickets being \$1 for raising some funds to help with Thanksgiving and Christmas.

Unfinished Business:

Old Business/New Business

Motion to Adjourn.

The following Officers attended the Executive Board Meeting led by President Joe Henschen on October 1st:

Chris Hubble

Chuck Cavicchio

Ken Grasso

Judy Dorris

O.D. Elliott

Clay Hansen

Willie Cochran

Brian Andrews

Tom Phillips

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VICE PRESIDENT

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RECORDING/FINANCIAL SECRETARY

Ken Grasso. (727) 744-2578

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Chuck Cavicchio. (727) 798-8506

EDITOR

Judy Dorris. (727) 403-2173

DIRECTOR OF RETIREE AFFAIRS

O.D. Elliott. (727) 608-6027

DIRECTOR OF INSURANCE

Tom Phillips. (727) 458-4127

SERGEANT AT ARMS

Clay Hansen. (727) 744-2456

TRUSTEES:

Willie Cochran. (727) 687-4163

Brian Andrews. (941) 748-5594

Joel Baez. (787) 629-3596

STEWARDS OF BRANCH 1477

St. Petersburg:

Crossroads 9	Ken Domingos	(716) 598-1205
Crossroads 10	Ben Hamilton	(727) 735-5125
Euclid	(Union Hall)	(727) 531-1477
Gateway	Tom Phillips	(727) 458-4127
Gulfwinds 7	Zulma Betancourt	(813) 597-8363
Gulfwinds 15	" "	" " "
Gulfwinds 11	Joel Baez	(787) 629-3596
Madeira Beach	Patrick Jacques	(727) 218-2721
Alt	Greg Welsh	(727) 804-4726
Midtown 5	Shiela Bradley	(813) 335-7783
Midtown 12	Harry Nieves	(787) 564-4993
Alt	Willie Cochran	(727) 687-4163
Northside 2	Tiffany Naughton	(727) 642-5466
Northside 16	Tonya Lee	(813) 270-2918
Open Air	Tony Mells	(727) 385-8579
St. Pete Beach	Cheryl Anderson	(727) 531-1477
St. Pete Main 13	Anthony Roger	(813) 574-9971
Alt	Johnnie Booker	(941) 580-1714
St. Pete Main 14	Alan Pollard	(727) 667-4254
Alt	Dee Grant	(727) 225-9272

Bradenton Bch	Brian Andrews	(941) 748-5594
Dunedin	Chuck Cavicchio	(727) 798-8506
Ellenton	Bert Lewis	(941) 266-2109
Englewood	Josh LaGrew	(763) 232-8954
Alt	Kris Beal	(813) 500-0841
Indian Rocks Bch	Denise Clark	(407) 474-9038
Largo 70/71	Jim Grazioso	(727) 410-6492
Largo 73/78	Eric Short	(727) 251-9846
Palmetto	Sheldon Jones	(941) 580-1058
Pinellas Park 81/82	Alicia Gary	(973) 981-2174
Punta Gorda	Chris Kotonski	(330) 212-1777
(PC Annex)	Sam Haddad	(941) 219-9306
Seminole 72/74	Anne Winkelbauer	(708) 692-6540
Seminole 76/77	Donny DeMilta	(727) 430-4413

Auxiliary 181		
President	Joyce Keller	(727) 541-2194

Congressional Liaisons':

District 13: Tom Phillips (727) 458-4127

District 15: Gene Carroll (727) 742-1640

The Twig of the Branch is published monthly by Branch 1477 West Coast Florida Letter Carriers. Articles and opinions printed herein are those of the writer and do not necessarily reflect those of Branch 1477 or the NALC. We invite all members to contribute material for possible publications. The editor reserves the right to edit or reject such material for reasons of good taste, legality, space, or the good of the Branch. Articles should be of general interest, be 350 words or less and be submitted by email to the branch by the 10th of the month.



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December, 2020



Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
		1 (TBA)	2 (TBA)	3 Executive Board	4	5
6	7	8	9	10 General Membership (Zoom)	11	12
13	14	15	16 (TBA)	17 Steward's Meeting (Zoom)	18	19
20	21	22	23	24 Christmas Eve	25 Christmas Day	26
27	28	29	30	31 New Year's Eve		