

# 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**

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VOICE OF BRANCH 1477

JUNE, 2020

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I have felt pretty safe entering into postal facilities. For the past several weeks. I hardly gave it a second thought. I have a mask, I social distance, wash my hands throughout the day, but it was not until Mother's Day that I realized the impact entering the Post Offices has on my family. My wife restricted herself from visiting her Mother on the holiday or get a visit from our Grandchildren for the risk of me bringing something home. Not a great Mother's Day for her.

As the positive tests rise in the Suncoast District, we have been lucky to see the reported facilities skirt around the Branch 1477 workroom floors. Seeing the numbers should change the way we think about the feeling of invincibility some undoubtedly feel.

As the Counties start to ease the stay at home orders the risk is still there. Carriers are only as safe as the riskiest co-worker. You have to know you can trust each other to make good decisions off the clock as well as on. Recently, we received a report of a positive COVID -19 test in the Branch. Although the test came in negative, it caused a great deal of concern in the units around St. Petersburg.

Locally we have discussed ways to minimize the possibility of exposure to the coronavirus or the possibility of unknowingly spreading the coronavirus to a larger portion of the workforce by working in multiple facilities. To the extent possible all city letter carriers will work in their employing facility.

**NEXT BRANCH MEETING: THURSDAY, JUNE 11, 2020 AT THE LETTER CARRIER HALL**

City Carrier Assistants/Part Time Flexible employees should be limited in the number of offices that they are loaned. In most cases reporting times for these assignments will be at 9:30 or later to allow the route to be cased and pulled down or loaded in the vehicle. Carriers finding themselves being assigned outside of their assigned office and a number of different offices should report it to a Steward or Branch Officer. It is ok to ask your immediate Supervisor to find out the details of the assignment for the day. Communicating with the gaining office should not be difficult. Entering an office can be limited to just rolling out the hamper with little interaction.

All of these steps will help to protect from spreading the virus. Working in an office even for a day that a presumed positive test is reported still requires the same masks in confined spaces, social distancing, and handwashing recommendations.

There are additional leave entitlements that will help as the year goes on. No one will have to make a choice between health and income. However, this could be a long process, having this leave available in September will be important if there is an upward swing in reported cases.

### ***Exposure during delivery***

If there is a delivery location that you feel exposes you to an increased risk, immediately report the delivery point to your supervisor, shop steward and/or branch officer. The Postal Service has stated that it is committed to making temporary alternative delivery arrangements for delivery points that may reasonably pose an increased risk.<sup>1</sup>

### ***Matching workload to workhours***

As we are experiencing, there has been an unprecedented drop in letter and flat volume. Communicating a morning estimate is a challenge. The total delivered mail volume is down an estimated 25% over the same period last year. Although parcels that are processed and delivered in the District are up 74% over sply and the parcels delivered at the destinating delivery unit are up 36%, it is a challenge to estimate daily workhours while having to return to the office for additional parcels and back track deliveries. Estimates should be based on what is available at the time of the discussion and amended after the deviation to obtain the additional parcels. How long it takes to travel, arrange, and back track deliveries should be included in the amended estimate. Do not be coerced into accepting

a piece on undertime when undertime does not exist.

Stay Healthy.

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<sup>1</sup> Postal Record April 2020

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## **Hubble's Troubles**

*By Executive Vice President,  
Chris Hubble*

### ***"It's not my PET..."***

Performance Engagement Tool (**PET**) is back and at the forefront for use by supervisors to project the daily workload of letter carriers. The *NALC* guide to the way **PET** works is it attempts to compare a letter carrier's past street time performance and mail volumes with the current daily situation and then uses that information to determine how long the program thinks it should take a letter carrier to perform his or her duties on that day.

The office time projection generated by **PET** only considers how long it would take to case and pull down the day's volume of letters and flats, based on 18 pieces per minute for casing letters, 8 pieces per minute for casing flats, and 70 pieces per minute for pulling down letters and flats combined. Furthermore, **PET** does not allow for fixed office time to perform such necessary daily functions as vehicle inspections, standup talks, retrieving mail from the throwback case, withdrawing mail, retrieving or signing for accountable mail, etc.

In addition, the street time is also projected differently. Supervisors will select one of four different street time options and apply that time for **PET** to utilize in projecting the street time for that day.

The four options are:

1. The average street time for the same day of the week for the previous six weeks. For example, if today is Monday, then one of the possible street time selections is the average street time recorded in DOIS for the previous six Mondays. If today is Tuesday, then the projection is the average street time recorded in DOIS for the

previous six Tuesdays, etc.

2. The average street time for all delivery days during the previous six-week period.
3. The most recent PS Form 3999 time.

This is how the **PET** works with the following data for casing and pulling down:

54 Letters/18	3 minutes
224 Flats/8	28 minutes
48 SPR's/8	6 minutes
326 total pieces/70	5 minutes
Earned office time:	42 minutes
Base street time:	6:30 hours/minutes
Total:	7:12 hours/minutes

**PET** thinks it should take 7:12 hours/units to perform all your duties on that day, with that data! So of that 7:12 hours/units, **PET** does not include any fixed office time (FOT) as mentioned earlier. On the average, a route has 33 minutes of FOT. When added with the generated **PET**, we get 7:45 hours/units!

While USPS has instructed its supervisors to compare the mail volume for previous days to the current day, when deciding which street time to select for **PET**, none of these projections take into account daily situations such as COVID-19 recommendations, increase in SPR's and parcels volumes as well as second trips. (Emphasis added) Of course, this will project a return time for the letter carrier earlier than what he or she more than likely will be able to achieve.

What hasn't changed although are the responsibilities and reporting requirements outlined in Handbook M-39, Management of Delivery Services and Handbook M41, City Delivery Carriers Duties and Responsibilities. What else hasn't changed is NALC's ability to challenge the use of any such projection as the determinant of a carrier's daily workload or its utilization as the basis for disciplinary actions. These issues have been settled many times in the past in national-level settlements such as **M-01769**.

Interpretive Step Settlement M-01769 specifically states, "Projections are not the sole determinant of carrier's leaving or return time, or daily workload",

and is violated when the supervisor informs the letter carrier that the **PET** projection is absolute. (Emphasis added)

In addition, *Section 122.33 of Handbook M-39, Management of Delivery Services* is violated when the supervisor refuses to provide a PS Form 3996 based on **PET** projections. It reads in relevant part: 122.33 The employee, upon request, will be provided a Form 3996, Carrier-Auxiliary Control, after the supervisor has been verbally informed as to the reason for the request. The employee shall not be denied the form and, upon request, a duplicate of the completed form will be provided the employee. (Emphasis added) This request could be, but not limited to being informed to return to the office for a second trip of parcels and SPR's. Perhaps your normal wash up and/or lunch location has closed due to COVID-19? Always list the circumstances that are present which will prevent you from finishing your assignment in eight hours on PS Form 3996 (Help slip).

Furthermore, *Section 115.4 of Handbook M-39, Management of Delivery Services* is violated when a supervisor's behavior, when discussing the daily workload, becomes disrespectful to the letter carrier. The relevant language reads: 115.4 Maintain Mutual Respect Atmosphere. The National Agreement sets out the basic rules and rights governing management and employees in their dealings with each other, but it is the front-line manager who controls management's attempt to maintain an atmosphere between employer and employee which assures mutual respect for each other's rights and responsibilities. (Emphasis added)

Management's use of the **PET** doesn't change the fact that it cannot be used as the determinant of a letter carrier's daily workload projections. Letter carriers are still responsible for estimating the amount of time it will take to complete their assigned duties, and management still has a responsibility to manage that workload within the confines of the handbook language as well as previous national-level settlements regarding the use of any such time-projection tool. Keep your cool, don't argue and don't make any decisions on your own.

In closing, it's come to my attention that management is giving investigative interviews to carriers asking *"why they extended their lunch(s) by two (2) minutes"*. Allegedly, management is under the impression since we've been supplied

with hand sanitizer, we no longer have to “wash our hands” prior to lunch. Item #1 of our Local Memorandum of Understanding reads as follows:

### **ADDITIONAL OR LONGER WASH-UP PERIODS.**

It is the position of the U.S. Postal Service that those employees in the Letter Carrier craft that perform dirty work or work with toxic materials should be granted such time as is reasonable and necessary for washing up. This is to include the period prior to his/her lunch break. (Emphasis added)

I'm taken aback that management would even go there after mandatory stand-up talks such as COVID-19 SUT 32 – Additional CDC guidance which states in relevant part:

- Wash hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds.

Regular handwashing is one of the best ways to remove germs, avoid getting sick, and prevent the spread of germs to others. Whether you are at home, at work, traveling, or out in the community, handwashing with soap and water can protect you and others.



## **Vice President**

*By Zulma Betancourt*

### **Telehealth for You!**

As we find ourselves in uncertain times that threaten our health, we want to make sure that everyone is aware and informed about various resources that may be available to you. As COVID-19 continues its rampage through our communities, we want to continue emphasizing the importance of social distancing and ensuring all have access to quality healthcare even in the sanctuary of your own home.

The NALC is now offering Telehealth for most healthcare plans. Telehealth provides you access to qualified healthcare professionals in various fields of medicine for any minor and non-emergency conditions. Telehealth can be easily accessed from any desktop, laptop, or mobile device in the comfort of your own home. The platform allows you to quickly

and easily schedule a virtual visit with a doctor for common ailments such as sinus problems and minor abrasions. Additionally, certain prescriptions can be written for you and sent to your nearest pharmacy for quick relief. It's that easy! All of this is offered to you within the user-friendly portal of Telehealth where you can also list your primary physician and medical history to keep everyone updated on your wellbeing. Please be advised that just like a normal doctor's appointment, a Telehealth consultation will come with a minimal copay.

Be sure to check out [www.NALC.org](http://www.NALC.org) to find out more about your health care plan coverage and what is available to you today!

Telehealth Virtual Visits, (2020), <https://www.nalchbp.org/news/telehealth-virtual-visits>

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## **Branch Welfare Reports**

**Because we were unable to hold the General Membership Meeting in April, the Sad and Glad news did not get reported. This is an update:**

### **SAD:**

- Glenn Fagan, Retired Carrier Crossroads and Officer—Father passed away.
- Connie Laine, Carrier Port Charlotte Annex—Husband Mark Laine passed away.
- Ken Ritchey, Retiree Crossroads—Wife passed away.
- Mike Fulpo, Retiree St. Pete—Passed away.
- Ken Grasso, Branch Secretary—Wife Pauline was in a car accident.

### **GLAD:**

- Wanda Clark, Steward Euclid—Daughter Amber graduated with her Masters from University of West Georgia.
- Kathy Colravy, Carrier Gateway—has a new Grandbaby.



## Retiree Update

By Director of Retiree Affairs,  
O.D. Elliott



## Director of Insurance

By Tom Phillips

### WHEN CAN I RETIRE?

Recently I have received a number of calls from carriers considering retirement, and in some cases wanting to know if they are eligible.

Under CSRS, you are eligible for optional retirement at age 55 with 30 years of service, age 60 with 20 years of service or age 62 with 5 years of service.

Under FERS, you are eligible for optional retirement with 30 years of service if you have reached MRA (Minimum Retirement Age), age 60 with 20 years of service or age 62 with 5 years of service. The MRA is determined by the year of your birth, from age 55 if you were born prior to 1948 to age 57 if you were born in 1970 or later. Under this retirement, you would receive a supplement from OPM which would cease at the age of 62, at which time you would be eligible for Social Security.

Under FERS, a carrier can take Early Retirement with Reduced Benefits with a minimum of 10 years of service provided they have reached their MRA. The reduction in this type of retirement is equal to 5% for each year under the age of 62. This reduction is permanent and does not stop when the retiree reaches age 62. A carrier taking this type of retirement does not receive the OPM supplement.

Both CSRS and FERS have provisions for Disability Retirement. Under both systems, to qualify for disability, the employee must become totally disabled for useful and efficient service in the position held. Under CSRS, a carrier must have completed 5 years of service for eligibility and under FERS must have completed at least 18 months of service.

Accumulated sick leave does not count towards the number of service years needed for eligibility in either CSRS or FERS retirement.

Below is a reprint of an article in May's Postal Record, by Director Health Benefits, Stephanie Stewart.

### This May, celebrating women's health

**Over the last few weeks, our** nation has faced an uncertain time. Our day-to-day lives and routines have been turned upside down. Our normal way of living has changed, and we've had to make tough decisions based on our own personal safety, as well as the safety concerns of our families and the elderly and high-risk members of our communities. Taking all this into perspective, the word for the day is selfless. According to Miriam-Webster, the definition of selfless is "having no concern for self, or unselfishness." As letter carriers, this is in our nature, but I implore you, don't forget yourself when it comes to health. Remember, self-care is not selfish; in fact, it's the exact opposite. I'm extremely confident that we have many selfless men and women out there; however, because both National Women's Health Week and Mother's Day are in May, I would like to focus on women's issues for this article. Don't worry, I'll discuss men's issues next month!

**Sometimes, as women, we continually put ourselves at** the bottom of the list when it comes to self-care. So what do you do when the teapot is empty and there is nothing left to pour? My answer is simple: consider your health. Are you, or are the women in your life, individuals who spend so much time juggling a career and thinking of others that there is little time left to think of their own needs? Over the next few weeks, we may not be able to get into a doctor's office, but this is a prime opportunity to look at the calendar and start planning for future appointments. Remember, when you support your health, or encourage the women in your life to support their health, you are still giving to those around you. Sometimes this is the best gift, as many illnesses can be detected in early stages with preventative care.

**In 2020, the Plan covers the following at 100 percent** when you use a PPO provider:

- Routine physical exam—one annually, age 22

and older

- Biometric screening—one annually, including:
- Calculation of body mass index
- Waist circumference measurement
- Total blood cholesterol
- Blood pressure check
- Fasting blood sugar
- Routine pap smear test for females age 21 through 65 one annually
- Human papillomavirus (HPV) testing for women age 30 through 65—once every three years
- Osteoporosis screening limited to:
  - All postmenopausal women younger than age 65 who are at increased risk as recommended by the U.S. Preventive Service Task Force (USPSTF)
  - Women age 65 and older
  - Breast cancer gene (BRCA) testing and genetic counseling for women at increased risk of breast or ovarian cancer as recommended by the USPSTF. Prior approval is required.
- Counseling for sexually transmitted infections
- Screening and counseling for human immunodeficiency virus for sexually active women
- Screening and counseling for interpersonal and domestic violence

### **Mammogram health**

Another important area that we sometimes forget, or ignore for various reasons, is scheduling a mammogram. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), breast cancer is the second most common cancer among women. The Plan covers a routine mammogram for women age 35 and older as follows:

- Age 35 through 39—one during this five-year period
- Age 40 and older—one every calendar year

### **So, what is a mammogram?**

A mammogram is an X-ray of the breast used to screen for early signs of breast cancer. The image often makes it possible to detect suspicious areas that may not be felt.

### **Healthy Pregnancies, Healthy Babies program**

Are you an expectant mother feeling overwhelmed and needing some support? The Plan offers a voluntary program for all expectant mothers. Upon enrolling, you will receive educational information and support throughout your entire pregnancy and after you give birth. Healthy Pregnancies, Healthy Babies will work together with you and your doctor to develop a plan of care. After delivery, you also will be screened for signs of postpartum depression. If you are in the High Option Plan, you can contact 877-220

-6252. If you are enrolled in the CDHP or Value Option Plan, you can contact 855-511-1893.

**This is only a summary of some of the features of the NALC Health Benefit Plan.** Detailed information on the benefits for the NALC Health Benefit Plan can be found in the official 2020 brochure (RI 71-009). All benefits are subject to the definitions, limitations and exclusions set forth in the official brochure.

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### **NALC CCA Retirement Savings Plan**

NALC CCA Retirement Savings Plan is a retirement income plan designed for City Carrier Assistants (CCA's) to supplement your pension. You make small payments to the plan while you're young, so you can receive a lifetime of monthly payments after you retire—even if you live to be 200!

Under the NALC CCA Retirement Savings Plan, you can also request a guaranteed number of monthly payments.

City Carrier Assistants who participate in the plan may transfer their Traditional IRA funds to the Thrift Savings Plan once they become carrier letter carriers. The Surrender Charge will be waived in this instance only. **Note:** The Thrift Savings Plan is not set up to receive Roth IRA transfers at this time.

You choose the amount you want to contribute to your NALC CCA Retirement Savings Plan. It can be as little as \$15 per pay period (the minimum amount allowed). You may also select your method of payment: MBA can deduct payments automatically from your paycheck, or bill you monthly or annually. \*

With as little as a one-time \$15.00 payment, you can start your NALC CCA Retirement Savings Plan and never have to make any additional deposits in order to maintain your policy in force. You may also make a lump sum deposit into the NALC CCA Retirement Savings Plan at any time to help build your plan's value.

- **Retirees may choose to pay premiums monthly or annually. Sorry, retirees are not eligible to use payroll deductions.**

**NALC.org.**

**To view entire article go to [Nalc.org](http://Nalc.org) under Member Benefits.**

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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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# June, 2020

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b> (TBA)	<b>3</b> (TBA)	<b>4</b> Executive Board (TBA)	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>7</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>11</b> General Membership (TBA)	<b>12</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>14</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>17</b> (TBA)	<b>18</b> Steward's Meeting (TBA)	<b>19</b>	<b>20</b>
<b>21</b> Father's Day	<b>22</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>25</b> South Branch Meeting (TBA)	<b>26</b>	<b>27</b>
<b>28</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>30</b>				