

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 616

VOICE OF BRANCH 1477

APRIL, 2021

Inside This Issue:

President's Report by Joe Henschen	1-2
Executive Vice President article—Hubble's Troubles by Chris Hubble	2-3
Scholarship Application	4
Health Benefits Update Nalc Disaster Relief Foundation articles by Joe Henschen	5-6
Director of Retirees article by O. D. Elliott	6
Sergeant at Arms article by Clay Hansen	7
Minutes of the Branch by Recording/Financial Secretary Ken Grasso	7-8
Emergency Federal Employee Leave and OWCP Claims for Covid articles by Joe Henschen	8-10
Auxiliary 181 News by Dottie Tutt-Hutchinson	10
Steward Meeting Attendees	10
Union's Data Page	11
Calendar	12



PRESIDENT'S REPORT

By President Joe Henschen

Twitter @ JaHe1

"Who wrote that policy?"

My Old Friend, I recall The times we had hanging on my wall. I wouldn't trade them for gold. Cause they laugh and they cry me. Somehow sanctify me, They're woven in the stories I have told...And tell again.

Tim McGraw

Scott "Scotty" Tyler,
5/21/48 - 3/3/21

Scotty Tyler clocked out for the last time on Saturday, February 28, 2004. He joined the NALC as a member of Branch 1477 when he entered the Postal Service in September 1973.

During his 31 years, he remained a loyal, strong, and valued Union member. He served as delegate to many National and State Conventions and served as Shop Steward. Scotty was also a valued voice (but not always one of reason).

Scotty left nearly every Historic Open-Air Supervisor or Manager speechless with challenges of rule changes by saying "Who wrote that policy?", "Is that policy in writing?", "Will you post that policy?".

NEXT BRANCH MEETING HELD VIA ZOOM: THURSDAY, APRIL 8, 2021

For some time, I worked with Scotty and others as a parcel post driver at Open Air (in between days of grievance handling or arbitration cases) till without warning, I got my own “policy” lesson. Scotty announced to the workroom floor “Why do you represent Letter Carriers – you don’t have a route, you’re nothing better than a UPS driver.” By the next bid cycle, I was awarded Route 141 at Open Air.

God Speed Brother

The Titanic had a Band

In my years of being on the workroom floor a common refrain included “the only thing different between the Post Office and the Titanic is “The Titanic had a Band”. Of course in hearing this announced so many times over the years it is great to celebrate the individuals who continued to show up, continued to mentor newer employees.



Congratulations to St. Petersburg Northside's, Tommy Leone on his recent last punch and 35 years of NALC membership.



...and Willie Cochran, Last Punch with 25 years as a NALC Member and 8 more Federal Years of Service. Willie has served the Branch as Steward, Alternate Steward and remains a Trustee for the Branch.

Thank you both for your dedication to the Craft and the Union.

While visiting these last day presentations, the Branch has presented NALC Membership Pins honoring 695 total Years of Service.

Receiving 20 Year NALC Membership Pins:

Rudy Betancourt, Albert Guisto, Nick Daley, Michelle Douglas, Tonya Lee, Richard Para, Derrick Samson, Alan Stiendorfer, Mike Venuti, Dave Jackson, Kurt Simetz, Craig Shade, Kim Kryza, Sonya Ross, Malissa Grant, Todd Thornton.

Receiving 25 Year NALC Membership Pins: Danny Johnson, Ellie Needham, Kyle Corcoran, Randy Daughtery, Jeff Dusseault.

Receiving 30 Year NALC Membership Pins: Johnny Ramdat, Jeff Stofel, Chuck Donahue, Les Jackson, Ken Visovich.

Finally collecting his hardware for 35 Years of NALC Membership, Marvin Floyd.

Thank you all for your dedication to the NALC and Branch 1477, I will have Membership Pins for presentation in all workroom floor locations in the weeks to come.

New Contract Ratified

What it means to you? We are preparing a Virtual Branch Rap Session in the next few weeks. We will cover topics dealing with the rights and benefits of Part-Time Flexible Letter Carriers, as well as topics directed at newly hired CCAs as the Postal Service moves to back fill the CCA compliment. Please watch Branch1477.org and NALC.org for updates on contract implementation.



Hubble's Troubles

***By Executive Vice President,
Chris Hubble***

An unwanted moving experience....

On February 23, 2021, NALC received notification the Postal Service has awarded a 10-year contract to Oshkosh Defense to manufacture the Next Generation Delivery Vehicle (NGDV). The purpose of the NGDV is to replace the aging fleet of LLVs and to expand the current delivery fleet. To bridge the gap between today and the deployment of the NGDV, the Postal Service has acquired commercial off-the-shelf vehicles, such as the right-hand drive Mercedes Metris and the Dodge ProMaster to supplement the delivery fleet. Based on the timeline information provided by USPS, NALC was optimistic a contract would be awarded in late 2019 and the first production NGDVs would be available for use in 2021. However, due to budget constraints and the Covid-19 pandemic the NGDV program was put on hold.

With that said, the USPS still delivers mail to nearly 155 million addresses nationwide - "more mail to more addresses in a larger geographical area than any other post in the world." Yet, of its 214,933-vehicle total fleet, nearly 67 percent of Postal Service vehicles are LLVs that are nearing or exceeding their expected service life. The LLV remains in use to provide needed delivery service because the Postal Service's financial condition has posed a significant barrier to funding a major overhaul of its delivery fleet. While LLVs are still moving carriers and the mail across the country today, the vehicles now come with "very high maintenance costs and increasing risk of parts supply problems and structural fatigue." Most of the Postal Service's LLV fleet is at an average age of 25 years old, which is near or beyond the vehicles' expected service life. Moreover, the impact on Postal Service vehicle operators is significant, particularly with respect to employee safety. *(Delinquent Scheduled Maintenance on Long-Life Vehicles by Kelly Danoy, Policy consultant)*

Considering the utilization life of most of our vehicles has been twenty-plus years which has resulted in the gearshift selector's expanded utilization, this often contributes to the one time the vehicle operator failed to place the gearshift selector adequately in park. This is verified by countless employees who have experienced runaway and/or roll-away accidents who make statements such as: **"I thought it was in park!"** Therefore, operators who have not established proper behavior for securing a vehicle upon leaving the vehicle controls in essence, are gambling with a time bomb. Though our vehicles receive scheduled periodic maintenance, employees are reminded to complete vehicle repair tags as described in section 8 of the carriers Handbook M-41.

Having a vehicle running or rolling unattended is not an image we want to portray to our customers and the public. In addition to tarnishing our image, we sustain vehicle damage, private property damage, and employee injury costs. Operators experiencing roll-away and/or runaways have been pinned by their postal vehicle, fallen under the wheels of their vehicle while chasing it down the street, and have allowed an unattended vehicle to strike members of the community they were servicing. Our unattended vehicles have struck parked vehicles along streets, homes and businesses, trees, and moving private vehicles in streets and intersections. Generally, contributing factors to the roll-away and/or runaway vehicle accidents are operators ***in a hurry, taking short cuts, and not properly securing the vehicle***

when leaving the controls of the vehicle. *(Manuel Peralta NALC director of safety and health)*

A review of roll-away and/or runaway accident data shows this type of accident occurs across the spectrum of our employee types. It ranges from the new, at risk driver, to the professional driver with thirty-plus service years. Please properly secure your vehicle when leaving the controls. It is the right thing to do. We as vehicle operators, ultimately make all decisions regarding safe operation of the vehicle. Therefore, we are the one that can make it happen!

Preventing Rollaway/Runaway

A rollaway refers to an incident where the vehicle rolls away without the engine running. A runaway refers to an incident where the vehicle rolled away with the engine running. Below are the proper procedures for securing a vehicle and avoiding this unwanted moving experience.

Whenever you park your vehicle:

- Apply brake.
- Set the hand parking/emergency brake.
- Place automatic transmission in park, place manual transmission in gear.
- Curb (Turn) wheels as appropriate.
- Turn off the engine.
- Remove the key.
- If the vehicle will be out of your sight, or if theft of the mail could occur, lock the vehicle, including cargo doors and windows.

We will all benefit by preventing rollaway/runaway vehicles - less injuries/pain and suffering, less property damage, less operational impact - for a positive impact on carriers and customers alike.

Last month's Twig incorrectly attributed the Legislative Update article to Tom Phillips.

In fact, it was submitted by **Gene Carroll, Congressional Liaison for District 15.**

Judy Dorris
Editor

George B. and Annie R. Elliott, Branch 1477 Scholarship Program

ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

1. At time of application applicant must be the son, daughter, or dependent of an active, retired, or deceased regular member of Branch 1477 as defined in Branch 1477's by-laws.
2. Applicants who have one parent in management and one parent a Branch 1477 member are eligible, provide all other eligibility requirements are satisfied.
3. When making application, applicant must be a high school senior or working toward an undergraduate degree in a community college, university, or vocational/technical institute.

REQUIREMENTS

1. Applicants must have a cumulative GPA of 2.0 or SAT and/or ACT scores reflecting the national average. GPA or SAT and/or Act scores must accompany application.
2. Application must be signed by the President or Secretary of Branch 1477 to verify parent's Branch 1477 membership.

REGULATIONS

1. Scholarship will be paid to the student and/or the college after acceptance to the college.
2. Scholarship may be used for any accredited trade school, vocational/technical institute, community college, or university.
3. Scholarship is non-renewable. Past recipients are ineligible to apply for future scholarships. Scholarship applications are valid for current year only.
4. Winners will be selected by a random drawing at the June branch meeting.
5. Two scholarships in the amount of \$750.00 each will be awarded.
6. Applications must be postmarked by May 31st.

George B. and Annie R. Elliott, Branch 1477 Scholarship Application (Must be postmarked by May 31st)

Branch 1477 Scholarship Committee 5369 Park Blvd. Pinellas Park, FL 33781
Please print clearly.

Please accept my application for a Branch 1477 Scholarship. I am a senior in high school, or working toward an undergraduate degree in a community college, university, or vocational/technical institute.

Branch 1477 Member _____ Active Retired Deceased
(name)

Relation to Branch 1477 Member Son Daughter Dependent

Applicant's name _____

Applicant's home address _____

City, State Zip _____

Applicant's phone number _____

This is to certify that the above named Branch 1477 parent is a member in good standing in Branch 1477.

(signature of Branch 1477 President or Secretary) Date _____

I certify that the foregoing information is correct to the best of my knowledge,
and that I have included all required items with this application.

(Signature of Applicant) Date _____



Health Benefits Update

Article by President Joe Henschen

Something You Should Know:

24 Month Conversions Create Quick Decisions.

While the Postal Service will maintain additional CCAs afforded to it under the Sunday package formula mutually agreed to during the previous contract, all CCAs in every size office who would have otherwise continued as non-career employees after 24 months of relative standing will now be automatically converted to career status.

Those CCAs who have reached 24 months of relative standing without being converted to career will be converted to Part-Time Flexibles and placed in a new PTF Step AA in Table Two of the soon to be released Letter Carrier Pay Chart. The Step AA hourly rate will equal the full-time Step A hourly rate, and the waiting period in PTF Step AA to PTF Step A will be 46 weeks. Upon conversion to full time, regardless of the PTF step they are currently in, PTFs will be placed in the full-time step commensurate with their number of weeks as a PTF and retain their time credit toward the next step.

60 Day Window May Close Faster.

As a newly converted Career Carrier, you have a window of **only 60 days** from your promotion date to pick and enroll in a Health Plan. If you miss that window you would have to wait until the next Open Season which starts the middle of November and runs through the middle of December 2021. However, if you are currently enrolled in a non-career plan though the USPS your policy will expire at the end of the month you are converted.

Please examine the many benefits the NALC Health Benefit Plan offers you and I'm confident that you would benefit from being enrolled in the Union Owned Plan.

The Branch has an Officer dedicated to assist you with enrolling in the Plan and help with understanding your benefits. Remember you only have **60 days** to enroll, and it can pass by quickly, so be informed and do your homework now. Our Director of Insurance is Gateway Shop Steward, Tom Phillips. His contact information appears in the Directory on page 11 in this Newsletter.

NALC DISASTER RELIEF FOUNDATION

The National Association of Letter Carriers (NALC) has established the NALC Disaster Relief Foundation (NALCDRF) to aid in alleviating the suffering of members affected by natural disasters such as devastating storms, earthquakes, and wildfires. The concept of a disaster relief foundation came from branches expressing a desire to help their sisters and brothers by creating response teams, providing desperately needed supplies, and in some cases offering financial assistance, but there wasn't a structure in place to fill that need. That's why this foundation was created to reflect the will of the members and make it easy for them to help others in need quickly and effectively. In 2018, the Foundation responded in the aftermath to assist NALC members affected by hurricanes that devastated parts of North Carolina, Florida, South Carolina, and Alabama. Our members were offered physical assistance from removing water-logged furniture to tearing out soaked drywall. Additionally, basic supplies including uniforms, drinking water and food were made available. Emotional assistance was also provided to individuals who had been overwhelmed by the storms' aftermath.

A donation to this foundation eases the suffering of your fellow members when disaster strikes, and 100 percent of NALC Branch and members donations will be used to provide supplies and award grants to NALC members.

Branches and members who wish to make a monetary donations may be made by check or money order and mailed to the address at the end of this article.

APPLYING FOR A NALCDRF RELIEF GRANT

An application for NALCDRF assistance is not an application for FEMA or any other disaster assistance. Relief grants are only considered for property damage sustained to a "primary residence," vehicle or personal property, such as but not limited to an earthquake, wildfire, tornado, hurricane, flood, or severe storm. Damage declared by applicant will be verified. • All applicants must be a NALC member as defined by the NALC Constitution: Article 2, Section 1 (a). • Members do NOT have to wait for emergency relief or insurance claims to apply. • All members having been temporarily displaced from their primary residence due to it being deemed uninhabitable MUST submit a signed, personal

narrative detailing the specific reasons for and the anticipated duration of the displacement. • Applications for grants from NALCDRF must be received no later than 120 days from the date that the natural disaster occurred unless the applicant can provide sufficient reason(s) why they were unable to complete and submit their application prior to this deadline. Requests for exceptions will be ruled on by the NALCDRF directors on a case-by-case basis. Complete the Application for Relief Grant found in the back of this book. The application contains three pages including the eligibility requirements and must be completed in full. The following types of documentation must be submitted with your Application for Relief Grant. Damage Information On the third page of the Application for Relief Grant, the member must legibly detail the specific reasons for the anticipated duration of their displacement from their primary residence (inhabitable or damaged). The member must establish if they are a renter or a homeowner. The member must specifically state and document any property or vehicle loss or damage. Proof of Displacement • If the member rents, they should provide statements from a landlord establishing property inhabitation. • If the member is a homeowner, they should provide documents establishing your primary residence (i.e., insurance policy, property tax statement, etc.). • If the member incurs expenses due to the displacement, they should provide hotel receipts or other documents to show these costs. Documentation of Property Loss • Include photos of damaged property. If the member rents the property, please explain if the photos contain property owned by the landlord. • If the member is a homeowner, they should provide receipts for labor, services, and supplies to repair the residence. • In cases of vehicles, the member should provide photos and receipts for labor, services, and supplies to repair the vehicle. If the vehicle is a total loss, the member should submit the assessment from the auto appraiser. • The president of the member's local branch may want to prepare a statement documenting the members who were affected by the disaster.

Disaster Relief Foundation

100 Indiana Ave. NW Washington, DC 20001-2144
 DisasterReliefFoundation@nalc.org www.nalc.org/
 disaster 202-423-2443



Retiree Update

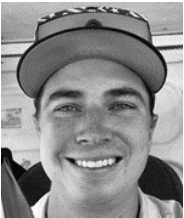
*By Director of Retiree Affairs,
O.D. Elliott*

After a question raised by a retiree concerning last month's article about a retiree marrying and providing an annuity for the new spouse, I realized the article needs some additional information. The reduction in a CSRS Retiree's annuity of 2 ½ % for the first \$3600 and 10% for the amount over \$3600 is computed as 2 ½ % of the first \$3600 of his/her entire annuity and the 10% for the remainder of his/her entire annuity. (Example: Retiree has a yearly annuity of \$46,000. 2 ½ % of the first \$3600 would be \$90 and the 10% of the remaining \$42,400 would be \$4240. This \$4240 added to the \$90 would bring the total to \$4330.)

Now, thanks to the question raised by the retiree noted above, I decided to do a little more research through the NALC's Retirement Department and found another factor that needs to be considered in such cases. This factor also affects FERS Retirees.

The following is from the Office of Personnel Management: **In the case of a survivor election for a spouse acquired after retirement, the retiree must agree to pay a deposit equal to the difference between the amount of annuity actually paid and the amount of annuity that would have been paid if the survivor election had been in effect continuously since the time of retirement or since the date the reduction terminated, whichever is applicable. Interest is assessed against the amount owed at the rate of 6 percent, compounded annually. This deposit is paid by permanent actuarial reduction that, in most cases, is less than 5 percent of the employee's annuity.**

My apologies for not making the above clearer in last month's article. One final thought. Should a Retiree getting married have a former living spouse with court ordered rights to certain benefits, i.e. a portion of his/her annuity, then consultation with an attorney would be recommended.



Sergeant at Arms

Clay Hansen

Hello brothers and sisters, my first son was just born February 26th so I've taken some time off of work and teaching academy. In my most recent classes though, the new CCAs continue to show concern on who to turn to for guidance once they begin working in their stations. I tell them the obvious answers by letting them know their OJT instructor and their union steward, but I'm writing this in hopes that the other carriers on the workroom floor will welcome them and reach out to let them know they have friendly resources within their station. We all were new hires once and I'll never forget the overwhelming feeling and anxiety I had when I was done with OJT and had to deliver mail on my own. As always, if you're a newly hired CCA and have experienced something that wasn't covered or explained clearly, or if you're an OJT and notice anything new hires struggle with please reach out to me. I wish nothing but success for all new hires so I want to ensure they receive the tools necessary to succeed after the academy.

Claybranch1477@gmail.com

Minutes of March 11, 2021 Membership Meeting



Recording/Financial Secretary

Ken Grasso

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: Motion to accept last month's minutes as printed in the Twig, by Eric Short, seconded by Tom Phillips.

Reading of Official Correspondence: by Ken Grasso: None

New Members: None

Branch by the Numbers: Members 758 with 730 paying dues. We have 28 members with no deductions, 4 are on Military Leave. 4 paying direct, 4 other OWCP accepted claims were sent letters, with 14 on LWOP. We have 14 down from the 32 members that do not appear on the dues roster, we are working with NALC to correct this (146 Gold Cards). 1392 Total Members.

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

Treasurer: Chuck Cavicchio—President Henschen read the account balances this month. Motion to send to Trustees by Jim Grazioso, seconded by O. D. Motion passes.

Director of Retiree Affairs: No Report.

Director of Insurance: Tom Phillips—I received 26 Eye Glass Applications for total of \$613.00 .NALC provides \$5000 in accidental death benefits. MBA also provides Life Insurance plans that you can access on line.

Political District 13 Liaison: Tom Phillips—HR 695 has 253 cosponsors. It repeals the prefunding requirement of the Postal Service... HR 1 passed out of the House now in the Senate.

Trustee Report: Brian Andrews—Audits were done for January's books.

Sergeant at Arms: Clay Hansen- No Report.

Editor/Webmaster: Judy Dorris—No Report.

Vice President Report: Zulma Betancourt—You need to make sure your vehicle is sanitized on a daily basis.

Executive Vice President: Chris Hubble—Minor route adjustments were finalized at the Main Office. Another one in Palmetto starts on Monday, and another one in St Petersburg.

Welfare Reports:

Sad:

- Brian Britt St. Pete Retired Supervisor passed away.
- Kevin Flanagan, Station Manager Madeira

- Beach— Mother-in-Law passed away.
- Scott Tyler, Retiree Open Air—Passed away.
- Sandra Pagan, Carrier Main Office—Grandmother passed away.
- Zulma Betancourt, Vice President—Father having surgery.

Glad:

Clay Hansen, Sargeant at Arms and wife Molly—Welcomed their first baby on February 26, Addison James.

Presidents Report:

COVID -19 Suncoast Numbers/Information
 1491 Total Cases +17 from 3/4//21 E Board Meeting
 1488 Confirmed Cases (+16)
 3 Current Unconfirmed/Under Investigation
 1392 Confirmed Positives have RTW (+81)
 96 Active Cases
 2161 Total Employees on Survey (+7 from 3/4 E Board Meeting)
 1,875 Employees returned to work
 286 Employees still on quarantine
 128 Required quarantine
 158 Self quarantine

Since 2/11/2021 General Membership Meeting the Branch has added positive tests at: Largo, Punta Gorda (2), Dunedin, and Open-Air Station.

NALC Reports: Congress Completes work on fifth COVID-Relief Package, signed into Law today by the President.

Of critical importance to letter carriers are two key provisions that NALC successfully lobbied for including:

Establishes an Emergency Federal Employee Leave Fund for federal and postal employees. The bill also carries forward **the same** COVID-related reasons for using the leave that were included in the FFCRA but adds new reasons, such as getting vaccinated. While the FFCRA required leave be paid at only 2/3 rate for certain reasons, this bill contains no such reduction in the rate the leave is paid. A \$570 million fund is included to pay for the leave.

Workers' compensation language that presumes a positive COVID-19 diagnosis for postal (and federal) employees as work-related.

The presumption would authorize benefits such

as medical, disability and survivor benefits for workers who contracted COVID-19 in the three-year period beginning January 27, 2020 and ending January 27, 2023.

New paid leave bank for Federal Employees and also workers at the Postal Service. This new leave bank will be until September 2021.

National Association of Letter Carriers has ratified the 2019-2023 National Agreement with the United States Postal Service. The vote was 60,111 to accept the agreement versus 3,341 to reject it.

2021 Food Drive in May is suspended again. It could take place in Oct of 2021.

Sunday, March 14th begins Daylight Savings Time again.

Postal Service is offering voluntary early retirements to most eligible non-bargaining unit employees at its headquarters as well as area and district offices. It goes into effect April 30 and doesn't come with any monetary incentive.

St. Petersburg Installation has announced the conversion of 6 CCAs and the date should be the 27th of March.

****** Sad News ******

We learned after the General Membership Meeting that:

Bob Gay, Retiree Madeira Beach—Suffered a stroke.

Presently he is at home and on the way to recovery.

Emergency Federal Employee Leave

Effective March 12, 2021, the American Rescue Plan Act (Act) provides employees with up to 600 hours of paid Emergency Federal Employee Leave (EFEL). This leave is available to employees beginning on **March 12, 2021 and continuing through September 30, 2021** - or until the funding established in the Emergency Federal Employee

Leave Fund (Fund) for reimbursement is exhausted. The leave is available to eligible employees who are unable to work due to one of eight qualifying reasons as summarized. - NALC.org

Qualifying Reasons

An employee is entitled to take EFEL related to COVID-19 if the employee is unable to work because the employee:

1. is subject to a Federal, State, or local quarantine or isolation order related to COVID - 19.
2. has been advised by a health care provider to self-quarantine due to concerns related to COVID-19.
3. is caring for an individual who is subject to such an order as in (1) or has been so advised as in (2).
4. is experiencing COVID-19 symptoms and seeking a medical diagnosis.
5. is caring for the employee's son or daughter if the school or place of care of the son or daughter has been closed, requires, or makes optional a virtual learning instruction model, requires or makes optional a hybrid of in-person and virtual learning instruction models, or if the childcare provider of the son or daughter is unavailable, due to COVID-19 precautions.
6. is experiencing any other substantially similar condition.
7. is caring for a family member with a mental or physical disability or who is 55 years of age or older and incapable of self-care, without regard to whether another individual other than the employee is available to care for such family member, if the place of care for such family member is closed or the direct care provider is unavailable due to COVID -19.
8. is obtaining immunization (vaccination) related to COVID-19 or is recovering from any injury, disability, illness, or condition related to such immunization.

Leave Eligibility

All career and non-career employees, regardless of tenure, are immediately eligible for EFEL.

Full-time Employees can receive up to 600 hours of

paid EFEL, capped at \$2,800 per pay period.

Part-time Employees can receive up to the proportional equivalent of 600 hours, capped at a proportional equivalent of \$2,800 per pay period.

Other Considerations

EFEL does not count as creditable service toward an employee's retirement benefits.

Employees cannot contribute to Thrift Savings Plan (TSP) while on EFEL.

As a reminder, the Postal Service provides an essential federal government service as part of the nation's critical infrastructure. Therefore, postal employees are generally not subject to Federal, State, or local quarantine or isolation orders related to COVID-19, so employees will generally not be eligible to use EFEL for qualifying reason (1) above. Additionally, no substantially similar condition has been identified that would qualify an employee to use leave for qualifying reason (6) above.

We are continuing to work the issues associated with implementation of these new leave requirements, and we anticipate receiving additional guidance from the Office of Personnel Management (OPM), which will administer the Fund, in the coming weeks. **In the interim, employees seeking to use EFEL should submit a PS Form 3971 indicating for which of the eight qualifying reasons they must take leave, and employees must affirmatively state that they are unable to work because of the qualifying reason.**

OWCP claims for COVID-19

Beyond additional paid leave, the COVID-19 relief package also includes a provision guaranteeing workers compensation benefits to certain federal employees who have contracted the virus and raise a claim with the Labor Department.

The American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 makes it easier for federal workers diagnosed with COVID-19 to establish coverage under the Federal Employees' Compensation Act (FECA).

The **legislation essentially presumes** federal employees who have direct contact with patients or members of the public contracted COVID-19 on the job. That presumption means employees may have

an easier time filing for workers compensation benefits with the Labor Department, because they won't need to prove they contracted the virus at work.

A letter carrier who contracts COVID-19 while in the performance of their job duties would have the full coverage of the Federal Employees Compensation Act (FECA) for related medical treatment and for wage loss or disability related to that condition or associated complications. The impacts of this provision are as follows:

Any COVID-19 claim filed under the FECA that was accepted for COVID-19 prior to March 12, 2021, is not impacted because coverage for benefits has already been extended.

Any COVID-19 claim filed under the FECA that was denied or withdrawn prior to March 12, 2021, is eligible for review under the new eligibility requirements.

Any COVID-19 claim filed under the FECA on or after March 12, 2021, will be reviewed solely under the new eligibility requirements.

What this Means to You

If you previously filed a COVID-19 claim under the FECA that was accepted by OWCP, you can expect no change.

If you previously filed a COVID-19 claim under the FECA that was denied by OWCP based on a lack of federal exposure or a lack of medical evidence establishing causal relationship, you can expect to hear from our office in the next 30-45 days.

If you have never filed a COVID-19 claim under the FECA and you believe you have contracted COVID-19 as a result of your federal employment, you will need to file a CA-1 (Federal Employee's Notice of Traumatic Injury and Claim for Continuation of Pay/Compensation) through the Employees' Compensation Operations and Management Portal (ECOMP).

Auxiliary 181 News

By Dottie Tutt-Hutchinson

We were sad to hear of Sandy Hart's lovely mother, Susan Hilliard, passing just a few days before her 104th birthday. We enjoyed her gracious company at our teas for a number of years, more years than some of us have been Auxiliary members. She was so young in spirit and appearance that it was hard to believe her age. Let's hope Sandy follows in her footsteps--we'd like to keep her around for many years to come!

While planning our St. Patrick's Day dinner, we couldn't find a single Sunday in March to meet because Joyce Keller and Lorie Davenport are travelling throughout the month. Joyce is heading to Indiana to visit with family and see her grandson, Seth, deploy to Kuwait. Lorie and an old friend will vacation in Nashville before heading to Arizona to visit his home. So, adjustable as always, we're combining St. Pat's with Easter on April 11th, 4:00, at Joyce's home. Bring gifts for Bingo prizes, please.

If you wish to be or stay a member, send \$25 dues to Joyce. Our next meeting is May 12, hosted by Alice Wannike.

Thanks to Zulma Betancourt who sent gift bags filled with pink goodies for Cancer Awareness. Happy April birthdays to Sandy and Joyce (both 4) and Zulma (29). Happy anniversary to Sue and Denny Elliott (3).

Steward Meeting Attendees

Meetings are held at the Hall and on Zoom, led by Joe Henschen and Chris Hubble

February 18th:

Tom Phillips, Shiela Bradley, Cheryl Anderson, Ben Hamilton, Anthony Roger, A.J. Pollard, Eric Short, Anne Winkelbauer, Donny DeMila, Chris Kotonski, Anthony Bowser, Denise Clark, Alicia Gary, Brian Andrews, Josh LaGrew, Sheldon Jones, Jodi Dodd, Devonnie Grant, Kris Beal, Jim Grazioso, Wanda Clark, Patrick Jacques, Ken Domingos, Harry Nieves, Joel Baez, Tonya Lee

BRANCH 1477 PHONE DIRECTORY

UNION HALL: (727) 531-1477

UNION FAX: (727) 531-1478

EMAIL: branch1477@tampabay.rr.com

WEBSITE: branch1477nalc.org

OFFICERS OF BRANCH 1477

PRESIDENT

Joe Henschen. (727) 608-6772

EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT

Chris Hubble. (727) 641-8396

VICE PRESIDENT

Zulma Betancourt (813) 597-8363

RECORDING/FINANCIAL SECRETARY

Ken Grasso. (727) 744-2578

TREASURER

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	Wanda Clark	(727) 408-0600
Gateway	Tom Phillips	(727) 458-4127
Gulfwinds 7	Christina Johnson	(727) 564-0620
Gulfwinds 15	(union hall)	(727) 531-1477
Gulfwinds 11	Joel Baez	(813) 817-5957
Alt 7,11,15	Zulma Betancourt	(813) 597-8363
Madeira Beach	Patrick Jacques	(727) 218-2721
Midtown 5	Shiela Bradley	(813) 335-7783
Midtown 12	Harry Nieves	(787) 564-4993
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	Scott Holderbaum	(813) 777-7626
St. Pete Main 14	Alan Pollard	(727) 667-4254

Bradenton Bch	Brian Andrews	(941) 807-5669
Dunedin	Chuck Cavicchio	(727) 798-8506
Alt	Scott Held	(727) 418-5742
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 70/73	Anthony Bowser	(954) 548-4852
Alt	Jim Grazioso	(727) 410-6492
Largo 71/78	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
Alt	Mike Oster	(443) 542-1052

Auxiliary 181		
President	Joyce Keller	(727) 541-2194

Congressional Liasons:

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.



Branch 1477, N.A.L.C.
5369 Park Boulevard North
Pinellas Park, FL 33781-3421

NON-PROFIT ORG.
U.S. POSTAGE PAID
ST. PETERSBURG, FL
PERMIT 5489

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

«AddressBlock»

April, 2021

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