

Iowa State Association of Letter Carriers



President's Report

May 2009

As we head into the summer months here in Iowa, with our normal heat and humidity, storms and flooding, each of us need to insure that we work as safely as possible. Now, we've all been told that by management, over and over again. Yes, we need to drink more water on hot days; stop if we're over-heated to cool down; avoid driving into water, standing or moving; and be prepared to take cover. These are all actions we should take in our personal lives as well.

But I'm asking you to do one more thing. Wear sun-screen (the higher the SPF, the better)! Nine years ago I went to the doctor (for another reason) and had a small growth removed from my arm. Two weeks later I was having major surgery as the growth turned out to be melanoma. Pure luck! Don't take a chance, do some self exams, or better yet, have your partner examine you. Know what to look for and don't hesitate to see a doctor. Most all skin cancers if caught early are curable. One in five Americans will be diagnosed with some type of skin cancer in their lifetime. I would suggest that as letter carriers, our numbers are even worse. Look around you at work tomorrow - one in five of you! Don't be on the negative side of that statistic.

Parts of the new route adjustment process are the dual consultations with carriers. You should be prepared. Know how long your route takes in the office and on the street. If you've rolled mail regularly, gotten assistance or had any problems with your route, make sure you speak up at the initial consultation. After you've received your estimated route time, start thinking about what changes may make sense for your route. Remember, even if your route comes in at eight hours exactly, your route may change because of other routes being realigned. So, be prepared for your second consultation. Lastly, let's all hope that mail volume turns around; the decline is because of the economy, and not from the daily mis-management we all deal with.

Recently a bill to allow bankruptcy judges to set interest rates and new mortgage balances were defeated in congress. While I somewhat question the ability to get out of some debts, when others struggle and scrape by to pay their bills, I have no doubt that the defeat of that bill was wrong. Did you know if you have a second, third or fourth home, a bankruptcy judge can reduce the mortgage and interest rate? I didn't! Apparently if your condo on the beach put you over the edge financially, you can go into bankruptcy and probably keep it. Of course, if you work for a living, you don't have that right - how is that fair?

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I recently received some education on leveraged buy-outs. A leveraged buy-out is where a person (such as Mitt Romney, & T. Boone Pickens), buys a controlling interest in a company on his own or with a group of investors, using only as much of their own capital as necessary and borrowing the rest. They then transfer that debt to the acquired company. Then, they can sell the company outright, dismantle the company, or if private, go public with the company. What a scam. They take the profits and leave the company (and of course the employees) holding the debt. Well, either this kind of stuff needs to be stopped, or, we need to get together and pool our money!

At our recent convention in Cedar Rapids, hosted by Branch 373, delegates were treated from two National Officers. Both our own National Secretary/Treasurer Jane Broendel and the Director of the NALC Health Benefit Plan Tim O'Malley, conducted presentations. NBA Mike Weir conducted some training as well as answered questions. Sue Marcus-Wilbois, Pres., of Branch 352 updated the delegates on EAP and new 5th District Congressional District Liaison Dawn Trotter put on a informational presentation concerning the NALC's Mutual Benefit Association.

Re-elected at the convention were myself, VP Mark Fallis (Branch 352, Des Moines) Sec. Tim Skidmore (Branch 69, Sioux City), Treas. Barb Sisley (Branch 483, Iowa City) Dir. Of Retirees Joe Miller (former NBA and also a member of Branch 483), 1st Dist. CDL Tom Reisdorf (Branch 257, Dubuque) 2nd Dist. CDL Jim Beach (Branch 644, Muscatine), 3rd Dist. Michele Donnelly (Branch 352, Des Moines), 4th Dist. Herb Copely (Branch 471, Mason City), 5th Dist. CDL Dawn Trotter (Branch 314 Council Bluffs). VP Fallis has also agreed to stay on as the State Legislative Liaison.

Lastly, I'd like to thank Doug Edmonds, Kim Mohr, the executive board and the membership of the Cedar Rapids branch for all of the hard work and for hosting this year's state convention. It was a great success and as always, will be difficult for the Clinton Branch to top in 2011.

Mike Birkett
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Iowa State Assoc. of Letter Carriers
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