

National Business Agent's Report
Danny Pittman
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I am beginning my monthly report on a more somber note than I would ordinarily, but I believe you will understand and agree.

On behalf of our Region I want to express condolences to David Davis, our current Step B representative in Kansas City, on the recent loss of his Mother. Many of us know of the tremendous loss we experience when we lose our Mothers, one that we do not recover from quickly. I also want to send condolences to the family of long time friend and Union Activist, Charlie Cook. The Ballwin, Missouri Charles W. Cook Branch 5050 bears his name in recognition of his years of tireless service. Charlie was very active in politics and was well known throughout the State and passed away on January 4th, 2011. He was Branch President for 30 years, a past Missouri State President and Local Business Agent. He will surely be missed by all. Our prayers go out to his lovely wife Nellie who always has a hug for everyone.

This office is extremely busy with preparations for our annual Regional Rap Session which will be held in St. Louis, Missouri on February 26th & 27th. We are excited about the aggressive training schedule which is being prepared for the Rap Session. It is very important that Branches send as many representatives as possible. We understand that staffing is an issue and Branch finances have taken a hit recently, but the level of training which will be presented will be quite worthwhile. We have a cadre of talented trainers and anticipate the information provided will have something for everyone who attends, regardless if you are a young steward or a seasoned one. The information and handouts you will receive should be taken back to your branch to serve the membership. We often find that

when we are ready for battle, the enemy is reluctant to fight. With the changes which lie ahead of us and National contract negotiations looming on the horizon, it is essential that we all be prepared to face these challenges head-on. The knowledge you have is a shield and the new knowledge you can gain from the Rap Session will be your sword.

Speaking of staffing, we are back to a full staff in the regional office with the appointment of Mark Sims to fill the vacant Regional Administrative Assistant (RAA) position. Most of you are acquainted with Mark as former president of Branch 203 Springfield MO and more recently as part of the Contract Administration Unit at NALC Headquarters in Washington. I hope you will join me in welcoming Mark back to the region and to this office. He will be a good fit and valued member of our team.

When we have offices with ongoing problems which are not resolved and those unresolved issues morph into gridlock and contentious environments we institute, *Intervention*. In this case, Intervention is both a noun and a verb. It is our joint process to get past the surface issues and correct the core problem, not dissimilar to extracting the splinter to allow a wound to heal.

Presently, the list of offices involved in the Intervention process is growing. We have Intervention sites in; St. Louis and Kansas City, Mo, Shawnee Mission, Ks, Waterloo, Des Moines and Ft. Dodge, Iowa. What we have is a **conundrum**, “an intricate and difficult problem.” The current climate in these offices is not favorable for our members. And every member is a *Union Representative*.

Intervention will work. The problem is, there are often not quick fixes or solutions. Recently, I was at a branch meeting and the president told the members the staffing issue will not go away soon. The historically high numbers of ‘613’ time

(steward time) will continue to rise along with discipline grievances. He stated; “the Union will uphold the contract, will be asking for escalating remedies on repeat violations and, will increase pressure on management daily to help them figure out the error of their ways and fix them.” What this President did, and I was very proud of him, was to not sugarcoat the problem. He was up front with the member and explained the situation we are confronted with and ask for the membership’s continued support of our national union. I want to thank Carl Rader of Branch #5521, Shawnee Mission, Kansas because he motivated me and the others present. I also want to especially offer my gratitude to all our union representatives who lead the charge daily to protect our hard won rights.

Until next month, keep your shield high and your dedication higher. It is my promise to do the same!

Yours in Unionism,

NBA Dan Pittman