

The Local Line

"A PPA Award Winning Publication"

The Official Voice of the
Northwest Illinois Area Local

Vice President Update by: Walter L. Elerby Jr

Early Out ???

Since the February issue of the LOCAL LINE was mailed to your home last month. I have received numerous phone calls and emails pertaining to the article. I wrote explaining the distinction between an "VERA" & "Early Retirement Incentive". In that February newspaper, I went into great depth in regard to how they both work. However as I outlined in the article it was my opinion that it would interest the Postal Service from a financial standpoint to seek approval from (OPM) Office of Personnel Management to offer it soon. This has to be the most common question asked by members during my 15 years of service to the Local. Your Stewards and Officers do not have an inside scoop or crystal ball on early retirement offers. The USPS has to seek approval from OPM before it may be offered. We normally find out when you find out unfortunately, also when the USPS negotiates a "Buy Out" with the APWU. In the meanwhile for those interested visit apwu.org and stay tuned for updates or drop me an email if you find something credible elsewhere. Stay tuned !!!

Incidental Leave

In all of our plants and associate office's that we represent, we have negotiated language and guidelines pertaining to Incidental Leave approval. However in some cases Management may disapprove incidental leave citing "date closed" or "services needed" In some instances the disapproved 3971 may be disapproved in violation of your LMOU. The only way to know is to bring it to the attention of your Steward and let us determine if a violation exists or not and file a grievance on your behalf if it does. We have to curtail any blanket policies of disapproval by placing them into the grievance procedure. Example: Some employees will ask a supervisor "is the book open?" They say "no" when there are 100 people in the section and only 4 off for vacation and leave. Now the member is forced to call in when they should have been entitled to be scheduled and approved contractually, had the LMOU been adhered to by management. This scenario helps none of us in the long run. Rule of thumb "ANYTIME" you get a 3971 back disapproved bring it to our attention and let us determine if there is a violation. If you don't bring it to your Union, management will continue to violate unchallenged and we all suffer.

Mimi & AL

We recently lost two outstanding representatives of the Local. Miriam (Mimi) Jackson who retired after giving us years and years of service as a Steward and Human Relations Director & OWCP specialist. She has assisted countless numbers of members by attending hearings at the D.O.L in downtown Chicago, aiding & helping our members navigate thru the Department of Labor rules and regulations. Most recently she helped established the Local's first Retiree Chapter that has continued to be active and meets regularly. Congratulations Sister Jackson and your service to your Union will be your legacy. Alkesh (AL) Modi recently resigned his Treasurer position due to health concerns. Al and I began our Stewardship together on Tour 3 at Carol Stream in 2002. As Treasurer he has helped to keep our Local in good financial standing and was always looking for a way to save money. He has done an outstanding job. Although Brother Modi is no longer Treasurer he continues to work for the USPS. We shall continue to keep Brother Modi in our prayers in hopes that his health improves so that we see him on the work room floor soon.

Floor Edition

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Special points of interest:

Early Out ???
Incidental Leave
Mimi & Al
Power of Collective Bargaining
Prayers to Family & Friends

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The Power of Collective Bargaining

This past June, I had the privilege of being selected for an assignment to Washington D.C. I was allowed to serve APWU National President Mark Dimondstein and the APWU Rank and File as the Chairperson of the 2016 Resolution Screening Committee. I had the opportunity to sit down with President Dimondstein and his wife and discuss the upcoming contract and more so the atmosphere during contract negotiations and arbitration. This was prior to our Collective Bargaining Agreement being awarded. Dimondstein categorized the Interest Arbitration proceeding as "*intense & vigilante*" on both sides of the table. The Postal Service along with their high powered attorneys demanded more concessions that would move our collective bargaining gains backwards. They requested the Arbitration panel to consider a three tier pay scale that would stagnate any raises and would basically decrease our wages over time. The APWU remained steadfast in its commitment to it's members by citing that as a result of the 2010-2015 CBA the Postal Service made huge profits year after year. This is just one of the many argument's that were brought to the table by both parties. The atmosphere during the Arbitration proceedings are very animated & heated as the future of our working standards lay in the hands of an Arbitrator. Dimondstein believed that his APWU Staff had done an excellent job of presenting its case on behalf of the membership. While on assignment in D.C, I had the opportunity to meet Phil Tabbita, APWU Manager of Negotiations Support who served as the Advocate for the APWU. He is one of the greatest minds under the APWU umbrella in D.C and I was thoroughly impressed by his knowledge and understanding of the CBA and how he presented the APWU's case in support of its members. I asked Dimondstein how do you think we will fair out with a decision? he said he was "*cautiously optimistic*". A month later we awarded one of the better contracts we have had in years.

Resulting in conversion of all PSE Maintenance, MVS, employees & conversion for Clerks hired before 1/6/14 which was a blessing for our PSE's at Palatine who had not been converted due to mis-management in the past that resulted in employees being excessed out the craft and facility. Management must return to a Veterans preference hiring procedure. Lay-off Protection for employees on the rolls as of July 8, 2016. (6 year requirement was omitted). Our May 2015-Sep 2018 CBA provides for us a 3.8% raise with 7 COLAs over 40 months. By comparison the 2010-2015 CBA was 3.5% with 7 COLA's over 55 months. The 2006-2010 agreement was a 2.5% raise with 8 COLA's over 48 months. Our PSE's rate of pay is \$16.42 Per Hr while a newly hired Full-Time regular Mail Handler rate of pay is 15.72 Per Hr. We are still ahead of the curve and have never went backwards in with any contract. However some of us take these hard fought gains for granted and don't see the bigger picture. A Level 6 Step O Clerk base salary is \$58,231 when you add A/L,S/L Holiday pay, Health Insurance, Sunday Premium, Life Insurance TSP & Retirement. This easily inflates to over \$80,000 look at your 2016 Personal Benefit Statement. These are the results of Collective Bargaining it is not an inherent right. Do you really believe that the Postal Service would provide these protections & guarantees if they were not obligated to do so? We are in a rich get richer atmosphere and we have a Republican controlled congress and of course you know who is President. The GOP has shown itself to be unfriendly to the labor movement and be anti-union. In my opinion at some point the fate of the Postal Service along with the rights to collective bargain will be put in the hands of our legislature. Get involved educate yourself and support your Local & National Union. Visit APWU.ORG, The Power of Collective Bargaining exists because of it Members that means YOU !!!

Prayers to Family & Friends

Over the past few weeks we have lost several co-workers and friends within our local membership and USPS family. Most notifications of death have been back to back in short period of time. Out of respect for the family for those that have passed on I will not list their names here. These string of recent deaths puts things in perspective for a lot of us, over the years we develop relationships with our co-workers. In fact we spend at least 1/3 of our lives here at the Postal Service during our career. Some of us spend more time here than we do with our families. There is a sense of comradery amongst most employees where you share not only a working relationship but get to know one another on a friendship level. Unfortunately some have concerns with one another, I encourage all of us to continue treat one another on the work-room floor with dignity and respect. Our recent loss of our co-workers is a reminder young or old that "we are not promised tomorrow." Some employees are coping with the loss of their co-workers a little harder than others, EAP is available 1-800-EAP-4YOU 1-800-327-4968 for those that need it. Grief counseling is offered and voluntary . I have reached out to Management and requested that they address the bargaining craft employees along with an EAP representative. Some employee's have suggested that a brief moment of silence be observed to honor their fallen co-workers. Management has agreed to work with us in an effort to address employees concerns in regard to recent losses and have EAP offer counseling for those who want it. We have experienced loss of co-workers before and I am sure we will again. However in this instance because of the short period of time and frequency of the untimely deaths it has been a bit overwhelming for some employees. We will offer Management input on coordinating some time (s) where employees can address their concerns. In the meanwhile you are encouraged to continue to lift each other up in prayer in remembrance of our passed on Brothers & Sisters !!!

