

NALC's Health Benefit Plan: Packaged to deliver

NALC honors Letter Carrier Heroes of the Year



NALC's 2017 National Heroes of the Year (from l): Garden Grove, CA Branch 1100's Daniel Ochoa; Grand Rapids, MI Branch 56's Evelyn Woodward; Springfield, IL Branch 80 Secretary Donald Van Etten; Connecticut Merged Branch 20's Clinton Parker; Charleston, WV Branch 531's Holly Allen; Johnstown, PA Branch 451's Matthew Lamb; Springfield Branch 80 President Jon Calloway; Minneapolis Branch 9's Deb Ochetti and Dayton, OH Branch 182's Donte Cotton.

"Letter carriers regard what they do as more than a job—to them it's a career in public service. They take their work seriously as they provide Americans with the most affordable and efficient postal services anywhere," NALC President Fredric Rolando said as he welcomed a large audience to the 2017 NALC Heroes of the Year Awards luncheon. "But their commitment to the people and neighborhoods they serve doesn't stop there. Every day, letter carriers help people who need help—and sometimes they do so at great personal risk.

"They do these things not because they are supermen or superwomen," Rolando said, "but because they know the neighborhoods they serve, and they know when something's not the way it should be. Because they've watched the families grow and the children grow up over the years, and they care about their well-being and safety."

The Heroes event was held on Oct. 4 in Washington, DC. The annual ceremony highlighted the special acts of courage and compassion performed by eight NALC members, as well as an entire NALC branch, to improve lives—or save lives—along their routes:

- **Matthew Lamb** of Johnstown, PA Branch 451, repelled by heat and smoke from a burning house before going to the back yard and telling the 20-year-old man trapped inside to jump out the window into his waiting arms, is the National Hero of the Year.
- **Clinton Parker** of Connecticut Merged Branch 20, a 30-year Army veteran named Eastern Hero of the Year, counseled a fellow veteran suffering from PTSD to yield his weapon, which he'd already fired.
- Letter carriers from **Springfield, IL Branch 80**, who held a fundraiser that enabled the family of a 12-year-old girl with muscular dystrophy to buy a van that could accommodate the girl's wheelchair, received the Branch Service Award.
- **Donte Cotton** of Dayton, OH Branch 182, who crawled through broken glass to extricate a baby girl from a car that had flipped onto its roof, received the Central Hero Award.
- **Daniel Ochoa** of Garden Grove, CA Branch 1100, a Marine Reservist, who saw smoke coming from a customer's house, spotted a propane tank near the fire, and doused the flames, is the Western Hero of the Year.
- Grand Rapids, MI Branch 56 letter carriers **James McKay** and **Evelyn Woodward**, who provided CPR to a postal clerk who fell face-first on the lobby floor, was convulsing in a pool of blood and then stopped breathing, are the Unit Citation recipients.
- **Holly Allen** of Charleston, WV Branch 531, recipient of the Carrier Alert Award, was concerned when he hadn't seen an elderly customer for a while, investigated and found the woman injured on her kitchen floor, even as natural gas was spreading through the house.
- **Deb Ochetti** of Minneapolis Branch 9, who donated bone marrow to save the life of a stranger she had never met, is the Humanitarian of the Year.

Luncheon attendees included the union's resident national officers, U.S. Postal Service executives—including Postmaster General Megan Brennan—representatives from other unions and organizations, and reporters. Rolando told the crowd that if the past were any indication, the heroes would downplay their accomplishments while asserting that any of their colleagues would have done the same thing in the same circumstance.

"That even applies to how we typically learn in the first place that something occurred," he said. "The one place we rarely learn it is from the letter carriers themselves. On the contrary, after doing something exceptional and even putting themselves in danger to save someone on the route, letters carriers usually brush themselves off and simply resume their routes, delivering the mail. Rather than seeking credit, they simply move forward—doing their job with the same professionalism as before."

Rolando also mentioned that nearly a quarter of letter carriers are military veterans who are wearing their second uniform, a proportion that was reflected—and then some—among this year's honorees with the full breadth of the military represented—the Army, Navy, Air Force and Marines, as well as the Reserves and the National Guard.

"Protecting and saving others is second nature for them," Rolando said. "The same willingness to help also applies to letter carriers as a whole, whether or not they're military veterans. That's because serving residents and improving communities is part of our character as letter carriers."

He then recounted each hero's actions to the audience. The full stories can be found in the November issue of *The Postal Record*.

The NALC president presented each honoree with an award certificate and a special lapel pin that the carrier can wear to highlight the distinction.

This year's honorees were selected by a panel of independent judges from more than 100 nominees, whose stories of heroism and community service were published over the course of a year in *The Postal Record*, as has been done since 1974.

The 2017 Heroes of the Year judges were Richard Bowers, chief of the Fairfax County, VA, Department of Fire and Rescue; Christopher Godfrey, chairman and chief judge of the Employees' Compensation Appeals Board at the U.S. Department of Labor; and Kelly Temple, director of labor engagement at United Way Worldwide.

All three read through the nominees' stories found in *The Postal Record* from July 2016 through June 2017, then met at NALC Headquarters to discuss them. The judges considered the merits of their choices over the course of a few hours before carefully choosing the honorees. Jenessa Wagner, who writes the "Proud to Serve" heroic carrier stories for *The Postal Record*, and Assistant to the President Geneva Kubal, who organizes the event, sat in on the proceedings to record the judges' picks and reasons for their choices.

News media coverage of the ceremony and honorees was extensive, with stories running in a number of outlets across the country—from Minneapolis' *Star-Tribune* and the Pittsburgh *Post-Gazette* to Illinois' *State Journal-Register* and Michigan's *Grand Rapids Press*. Dayton, OH's WHIO-TV, Charleston, WV's WOWK-TV and Waterbury, CT's WTNH-TV also covered the event. Visit nalc.org/heroes to find links to these and many other stories.

At AFL-CIO's 2017 convention in St. Louis—

NALC embraces pledge to 'Join. Fight. Win.'

The 28th Constitutional Convention of the AFL-CIO convened in St. Louis Oct. 22-25 and representatives from NALC were there in force. Six of the seven delegates elected in 2016 at NALC's Los Angeles convention were on hand: Providence, RI Branch 15's Ingrid Armada; Medford, OR Branch 1433's Denise Brooks; New Orleans Branch 124's Lloyd Doucet; Chicago Branch 11's Elise Foster; Los Angeles Branch 24's Anita Guzik; and New York Branch 36's Charles Heege. (York, PA Branch 509's Stephen Hanna could not attend.)

In addition, NALC also was represented by President Fredric Rolando and Secretary-Treasurer Nicole Rhine, who are AFL-CIO delegates by virtue of their offices. There also were several other NALC members at the convention, serving as delegates for state and local labor bodies.

President Rolando appeared on stage on multiple occasions as a member of the Resolutions Committee, moving for the adoption of resolutions on fighting the privatization of the Department of Veterans Affairs, promoting the rights of immigrant workers and defending voting rights in America. He also appeared as the co-chairman of the AFL-CIO executive council's finance committee on the convention's final day.

The convention discussed and debated many of the most pressing issues faced by the nation's labor movement, and it adopted the federation's plans to promote a "Workers' Bill of Rights" across the United States. Delegates also overcame significant divisions and reached consensus on key public policies, including the means for achieving universal health care coverage and for addressing climate change while protecting existing energy-sector jobs.

Two resolutions promoted by NALC and the American Postal Workers Union (APWU) also were adopted at the convention—one to promote voting by mail, which was folded into a voting rights resolution, and another to advance the concept of postal banking in America. Secretary-Treasurer Rhine addressed the convention on the vote-by-mail issue. (See a video of her appearance posted at nalc.org.)

NALC delegates attended a variety of seminars and training workshops, including those on common-sense economics, on organizing unions to be advocates for veterans, on recruiting union members to run for public office, and many others.

The current executive leaders of the AFL-CIO—President Richard Trumka, Secretary-Treasurer Liz Shuler and Executive Vice President Tefere Gebre—were re-elected at the convention. President Rolando also was re-elected as a vice president of the federation.



From l: NALC's delegation to the AFL-CIO's 2017 convention in St. Louis; NALC President Fredric Rolando delivers a report; NALC Secretary-Treasurer Nicole Rhine speaks in favor of a convention resolution on voting by mail.

Just as letter carriers deliver reliable service our customers can depend on, the NALC Health Benefit Plan delivers first-class benefits to keep you and your family healthy at a reasonable cost.

It's packaged to deliver. And every year, the Plan gets better by keeping up with the latest medical advances and working to lower your costs.

The NALC Health Benefit Plan was created by letter carriers, for letter carriers, in 1950. The Plan's director, Brian Hellman, is a member of New York City Branch 36 and has been a letter carrier since 1982. By working for you, not for profit, the Plan keeps your health at the top of its list of priorities.

Open Season for choosing a health plan through the Federal Employee Health Benefits (FEHB) Program is Nov. 13 through Dec. 11.

Whether you are starting your career, have a few years under your belt carrying the mail or have retired, please take a few minutes to look at the special NALC Health Benefit Plan insert in the November issue of *The Postal Record*.

"We're proud of the role the NALC Health Benefit Plan has played in keeping letter carriers and their families healthy," NALC President Fredric Rolando said. "Please take the time to consider how the Plan can be there for you."

The Plan offers a comprehensive High Option health benefit package, a fee-for-service plan with a preferred provider (PPO) network that offers generous benefits with low out-of-pocket costs. In partnership with Cigna, the Plan offers access to more than 2.6 million doctors and specialists and thousands of medical facilities. Chances are your doctor is already part of the network, but to make sure, call the PPO Locator line at 877-220-NALC (6252).

The High Option Plan pays for a wide variety of preventive care treatments and tests for adults and children at 100 percent when you use a PPO provider. Prescription medication is also covered under the High Option Plan at reasonable rates. And if Medicare is your primary payor, the High Option Plan also offers great benefits. Signing up for the NALC Health Benefit Plan in addition to your Medicare Parts A and B coverage is a good way to assure that you won't be surprised by unexpected costs. The Plan pays for most out-of-pocket medical costs that Medicare doesn't—deductibles, co-payments and co-insurance charges—for doctor visits, procedures and hospitalization. It also gives Medicare recipients access to lower out-of-pocket costs for prescription drugs.

With the Health Benefit Plan, you also get access to a wealth of programs to help you maintain or improve your health. The Plan is always working to improve by keeping up with the latest medical advances and recommendations by health professionals. For 2018, the Plan has added to its list of preventive benefits to help keep you and your family at your best, included coverage of tuberculosis screening, low-dose aspirin to prevent colorectal cancer and cardiovascular disease, and 3-D mammograms that can better detect breast cancer.

The Plan will also cover breast-feeding support and counseling to help newborns and new mothers alike, and wigs for hair loss caused by cancer treatment.

These are just a few of the improvements the Plan has made to keep you and your family at your best. For a list of more benefits and changes, and to compare the NALC Health Benefit Plan with other plans, go to opm.gov/fehbc.

These great benefits come at reasonable rates. In 2018, the active career letter carrier's share of the High Option premium will be \$72.42 bi-weekly for "Self Only," \$157.36 bi-weekly for "Self and Family" and \$173.42 bi-weekly for "Self Plus One." For retired carriers, the rates are \$170.71 per month for "Self Only," \$374.68 per month for "Self and Family" and \$405.30 per month for "Self Plus One." Different rates and benefits apply to the Value Option Plan and CDHP and to other types of employees; see the Plan's official brochure for details.

- Active letter carriers have four ways to enroll in the NALC Health Benefit Plan during Open Season:
- Go to liteblue.usps.gov. You must have your employee ID number (it's the eight-digit number printed on your earnings statement just above the words "employee ID"). You will also need your USPS PIN (it's the same one you use to access PostalEASE).
 - The Blue Page (Intranet) at work.
 - Employee Self-Service Kiosks located at some USPS facilities.
 - PostalEASE by telephone. Call 877-4PS-EASE (877-477-3273) and enter Option 1.

Annuity and retirees can enroll by calling Employee Express at 800-332-9798, by going to OPM's Open Season website at retirefehbc.opm.gov, or by submitting a Standard 2809 to your retirement office.

If you submit your change by mail, the address is: OPM, Open Season Processing Center, P.O. Box 5000, Lawrence, KS 66046-0500.

The information in this article is just a summary of some of the features of the NALC Health Benefit Plan. Detailed information on the Plan can be found in the official 2018 brochure (RI 71-009) at nalcbbp.org. All benefits are subject to the definitions, limitations and exclusions set forth in the official brochure.

"During this Open Season, I urge letter carriers to look closely at the NALC Health Benefit Plan and its many benefits," Rolando said. "I think you'll find that it's right for you and your family."

CCA health benefits

This Open Season is another opportunity for city carrier assistants (CCAs) to enroll in or change their health benefit coverage if they did not take advantage of the special enrollment period that was offered to them. That enrollment period, which ended on Oct. 19, was offered as a result of the additional USPS contributions toward CCA health benefit premiums negotiated in the 2016-2019 National Agreement between NALC and USPS, ratified by the members on Aug. 7.

Under the 2016 agreement, CCAs who choose "Self Plus One" or "Self and Family" coverage in the USPS Non-Career Health Benefit Plan will receive a contribution equal to 65 percent of the total premium during their first year of employment as CCAs and 75 percent of the total premium after their first year of employment as CCAs. This increased benefit, negotiated by NALC, will save CCAs hundreds of dollars in health benefit premiums.

CCAs who elect "Self Only" coverage in the USPS Non-Career Health Benefit Plan will continue to receive bi-weekly USPS contributions of \$125 toward their premiums. National Agreement Appendix B states:

The Postal Service will make a bi-weekly contribution to the total premium for any CCA employee who wishes to participate in the USPS Noncareer Health Care Plan (USPS Plan) self-only option equal to the greater of (a) \$125, or (b) the minimum required by the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act, and applicable regulations.

The Postal Service will make a biweekly contribution equal to 65 percent of the total premium of any CCA employee who wishes to participate in the USPS non-career Health Plan (USPS Plan) for either self plus one coverage or family coverage during the CCA's initial year of CCA employment. After a CCA's first year of employment, the Postal Service will make a bi-weekly contribution equal to 75 percent of the total premium for either self plus one or family coverage.

The few CCAs who had been receiving a USPS contribution toward one of NALC's consumer-driven plans should consider changing to the USPS Non-Career Health Benefit Plan, as CCAs are no longer eligible to receive any USPS contribution toward coverage in one of NALC's consumer-driven plans.

CCAs may enroll in, or change their enrollment to, the U.S. Postal Service Non-Career Health Benefit Plan during the upcoming Open Season, Nov. 13-Dec. 11.

Rolando announces regional appointments

NALC President Fredric Rolando has appointed Sioux Falls, SD Branch 491 letter carrier **Brent Fjerestad** as one of NALC's legislative and political organizers. Fjerestad, a graduate of 2010's Leadership Academy Class 10, has served his branch in a number of capacities, including vice president, trustee and shop steward. At the time of his appointment, Fjerestad was president of the South Dakota State Association of Letter Carriers, an office he had held since 2009. He is a graduate of South Dakota State University and attained the rank of staff sergeant with the South Dakota Air National Guard. His appointment was effective Sept. 18.

San Diego Branch 70 letter carrier **Tami Seastrand** has been appointed by Rolando to serve as a regional workers' compensation assistant (RWCA) for NALC members in Region 1 (California, Hawaii, Nevada and Guam). Seastrand has served Branch 70 as a shop steward, arbitration advocate, Step B representative and certified grievance representative. She holds an associate's degree in mechanical engineering, and in 2008 she completed a paralegal program at the University of California, San Diego. Her appointment was effective Sept. 25.

Rolando has appointed Rutland, VT Branch 495 letter carrier **Christopher Henwood** to serve as an RWCA out of NALC Headquarters in Washington, DC. Henwood has served his branch as a shop steward, Formal Step A representative and vice president. At the time of his appointment, he was president of the Vermont State Association of Letter Carriers, where he had also served previously as secretary and director of education. Henwood, a graduate of 2015's Leadership Academy Class 19, holds a degree in electrical engineering from the University of Vermont. His appointment was effective Oct. 9.

San Antonio, TX Branch 421 letter carrier **Karrie Kimbrell** has been appointed by Rolando as a regional administrative assistant (RAA) for NALC members in Region 10 (Texas and New Mexico). Kimbrell has served the letter carriers of Austin, TX Branch 181 as a shop steward, recording/financial secretary and vice president. From 2015 until her appointment as RAA, she was an Office of Workers' Compensation representative for Branch 421. Kimbrell, a graduate of 2008's Leadership Academy Class 6, has served Texas letter carriers as a Formal Step A representative and as an instructor at Region 10 schools. She received dispute resolution team (DRT) certification in 2010; a year later, she was appointed primary DRT facilitator for the Postal Service's Rio Grande District. Since 2016, Kimbrell has served as a national DRT facilitator. Her appointment is effective Nov. 6.



Brent Fjerestad



Christopher Henwood



Tami Seastrand



Karrie Kimbrell

National Association of Letter Carriers
100 Indiana Ave. NW
Washington, DC 20001-2144
202-393-4695 | www.nalc.org

Fredric V. Rolando, President
EDITORIAL STAFF:
Philip Dine, Director of Communications and Media Relations
Mike Shea, Designer/Web Editor
Joe Conway, Internet Communications Coordinator
Rick Rodgers, Writer/Editor
Jenessa Wagner, Editorial Assistant

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