



It's that time again

As you may have read elsewhere in *The Postal Record* or on the NALC website, nalc.org, the application period for the 2012 Leadership Academy classes opened on June 1, and will close on Sept. 30.

Application forms are available on the NALC website or can be obtained from your national business agent's office. Any active carrier may apply for one of the four slots to be selected from his or her region. Those who applied last year for the 2011 classes but were not selected need not reapply. However, they may send updated information to be added to their previously submitted applications and are encouraged to do so.

There will be two Leadership Academy classes in 2012.

Each class consists of three separate weeks of instruction on a variety of subjects at the National Labor College located just outside the Washington, DC, Beltway in Silver Spring, MD. Students also will be required to complete outside-learning projects upon returning home following Weeks 1 and 2. After graduation, the students will spend a week working in their national business agent's office.

Currently, Class 13 is scheduled for the weeks of Jan. 8-13, March 11-16 and May 20-25. Class 14 is scheduled to be held Aug. 5-10, Oct. 7-12 and Dec. 2-7. Upon selection, students will be advised of the exact dates they will need to be available for each class. Transportation, room, meals, lost wages and other associated costs while attending the Academy and working in the business agent's office are paid by the NALC.

The application form has two main parts, one for the potential student to fill out and one for the mentor. The applicant's portion requests contact information, union positions held and any other experience, skills or knowledge the applicant may want to list. Applicants must complete a 300-500 word essay explaining their interest in the Leadership Academy and qualifications to participate in it. The second part is to be completed by the applicant's mentor.

Mentors must provide a written recommendation explaining how long they have known the applicant, why

they believe the applicant should be accepted to the Leadership Academy and their sense of the applicant's leadership potential. The form also has a statement of mutual commitment that the mentor and applicant must sign.

Having a good mentor is one of the most important components for a student to have a successful Leadership Academy experience. Applicants are encouraged to choose their mentors carefully. Generally, a good choice for a mentor would be someone who displays good leadership skills and is willing to spend a significant amount of time interacting with the student on a regular basis while providing guidance and encouragement. A mentor also should be in a position to provide the time and venues for the student to practice the skills he or she has been building at the academy and be available to observe work and provide appropriate feedback. Branch presidents or other branch officers are often good choices for mentors, as they have more opportunities to work closely with the student and can provide the help needed with the outside learning projects. Leadership Academy graduates, NBAs, RAAs and state officers also have mentored past students and are another good source.

Anyone who is at all interested is encouraged to find a mentor and apply. Completed applications must be received at NALC Headquarters by Sept. 30. Two applicants from each of the 15 NALC regions will be chosen for each of the 2012 classes. Those selected will be notified around the end of October. Mentors will receive an informational packet explaining their role and giving them some mentoring ideas and tips.

As noted above, those who applied but were not selected for the 2011 classes do not need to reapply; their applications will be considered for 2012. To those who applied before that: Please reapply. As I explained in my April article, it's a difficult job deciding whom to select, as we have many more qualified applicants than we have positions to fill. So if you aren't selected the first time, don't be discouraged and give up; keep trying. Determination and persistence are the kind of characteristics that strong leaders possess. ☒