



Now accepting applications for 2013 Leadership Academy

As you may have read elsewhere in *The Postal Record* or on the NALC website, the application period for the 2013 Leadership Academy classes was to open on June 1. Application forms are available at nalc.org or can be obtained from the national business agent's office. Any active member may apply for one of the 60 spots filled each year.

Those interested in applying to the Academy should be aware that there are a few changes in the application/acceptance process from last year. First is that the applications must be received by Aug. 31. This is one month earlier than in previous years. The reason for this change is to allow the selections to be made earlier so those chosen will have additional advance notice to make leave and travel arrangements.

The second change concerns prior applicants. As of this year, all previous applications have been moved to inactive status. Those who wish to be considered for one of the 2013 Leadership Academy spots must reapply by completing a new application form.

There will be two Leadership Academy classes held in 2013. Each class consists of three separate weeks of instruction on a variety of subjects. In previous years, the sessions were held at the National Labor College in Silver Spring, MD. Sadly, after more than 35 years of existence, the National Labor College campus is closing at the end of August, so we are in the process of relocating the Leadership Academy to another facility in the Washington, DC, area. In addition to three weeks of classroom study at the Academy, students also are required to complete outside learning projects upon returning home following Weeks 1 and 2. Upon graduation, the students will spend a week working in their national business agents' offices.

Currently, Class 15 is scheduled for the weeks of Jan. 6-11, March 3-8 and May 5-10. Class 16 is scheduled to be held Aug. 4-9, Oct. 6-11 and Dec. 8-13. 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 applicant to complete 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- to 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.

A good mentor is one of the most important components of a successful Leadership Academy experience. Applicants are encouraged to choose their mentors carefully. Generally, a good mentor choice would be someone who displays leadership skills and is willing and, most importantly, able 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 their student's work and provide appropriate feedback and critique.

Branch presidents or other branch officers often are 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 from previous classes also have mentored past students and are another good source.

I encourage any NALC member who is at all interested in the Leadership Academy to find a mentor and submit an application. As mentioned above, completed applications *must be received* at NALC Headquarters by Aug. 31. Two applicants from each of the 15 NALC regions will be chosen for each of the 2013 classes. Those selected will be notified sometime in early October. Mentors will receive an informational packet explaining their role and giving them some mentoring ideas and tips.

As noted above, those who have applied previously but were not selected must reapply to be considered. It's a difficult task deciding whom to select, as there are many more qualified applicants than positions to fill. But if you have applied before and were not selected, don't be discouraged and don't give up; keep trying. Determination and persistence are the kinds of characteristics that strong leaders possess. ☒