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## A look at the letter carrier staff members who work for you at NALC Headquarters



**N**ALC's national officers represent letter carriers from Headquarters in Washington, DC, with the help of the staff members who assist with the day-to-day functions that keep the union motor running smoothly. From political organizing to accounting to communications, staffers with years of experience handle the professional and administrative work.

While most of the staff are professionals who bring relevant work experience from outside of the Postal Service, in a few areas, a select group of letter carriers also work as staff, serving their brothers and sisters by using the expert knowledge of carrier issues developed back home.

Some of the letter carriers on staff are leaders in contract issues, OWCP, dispute resolution or disability issues. Others direct the union's community service efforts or work to develop its next generation of leaders. Whatever their responsibilities, these letter carrier staffers assure that the knowledge they have gained as union representatives and leaders is put to good use at the national level for all members.

The letter carriers working as staff at Headquarters not only understand the issues they work on, they know firsthand the challenges that carriers deal with each workday—casing and carrying the mail, filling out forms, dealing with customers and managers, and getting it all done by the end

of the day. They know all the terms and acronyms and form numbers; they know how letter carriers deal with unusual situations; they know how the National Agreement works in the real world, not just on paper.

"Around the nation, there are so many letter carriers who have become experts at different aspects of what we do as a union," NALC President Fredric Rolando said. "I feel lucky, and proud, when I ask them to put their skills and knowledge to work for all of our members and they agree to come to Washington, DC."

Whether they come to work in the Contract Administration Unit (CAU) or on community issues, the overall mission is the same.

"Everything we do is about doing what's best for the members," Brian Renfroe said. The former Mississippi State Association and Hattiesburg, MS Branch 938 president applies this to his job in the CAU. "We try to do everything we can to give the regions support and keep them informed," he said, "to put them in the best position to represent the membership."

Renfroe draws on his experience with route adjustments, which he valued because it involved working closely with every letter carrier in each station, and his experience attending the NALC Leadership Academy in 2008.

Those experiences are what make the letter carrier staff members



**Bill Bothwell.** Bill started with the Postal Service as a clerk in 1986 before shifting to the letter carrier craft in 1994. He is a member of New Hampshire Merged Branch 44, where he served in several offices, including vice president. He came to Headquarters in 2010, and handles mostly arbitration issues in the CAU.



**John Collins.** After serving as a steward, Step B team member, and nearly 25 years as president of Zanesville, OH Branch 63, John has applied his knowledge for the CAU since 2011.



**Greg Dixon.** Greg, from Marietta, GA Branch 1119, is an assistant to the president for contract administration and DRP. A letter carrier since 1986, he served as his branch's president for 15 years before coming to Headquarters in 2008.

**Pam Donato.** The former president of Minneapolis Branch 9 came to Headquarters in 2011. She manages the union's community and membership outreach efforts, including the food drive, MDA and Carrier Alert.



uniquely qualified for serving the full union's membership.

"Your perspective always comes from the fact that you carried mail," Pam Donato said. "You had cased the mail and carried a satchel. You had been hassled by a boss, or helped by a boss. You know what a letter carrier goes through."

Donato, who coordinates the union's community and membership outreach efforts, is from Minneapolis, where she carried mail for 15 years and spent an additional 12 years working for Minneapolis Branch 9, including five years as president. She uses the experience of those years as an administrator and problem-solver at the branch to help other branches organize their community outreach efforts, including the food drive and MDA, more effectively.

Headquarters is larger and busier than she had imagined, but she was ready. "I had no idea how many people it took, and how big this ship is," she said. "It's truly amazing."

For John Collins of Zanesville, OH Branch 63, the ability to adapt to a larger stage is a useful skill in his work at Headquarters helping negotiate memoranda of understanding (MOUs) with the Postal Service, scrutinizing USPS manuals and handbooks for compliance and answering questions from letter carriers in the field.

"You have to be able to juggle different things at different times," he said.

"There's always uncertainty. The five-day delivery effort from the postmaster general and stuff from Congress—things are always changing."

For the letter carriers who come to work at National, it's not only about what they did before—it's also about finding new ways to contribute.

"I'm doing things I never thought I'd be doing," Sue Wellhausen said. "It's a thrill."

The former Eugene, OR Branch 916 vice president and full-time Step B representative now manages Step B teams nationwide as part of the dispute resolution team staff at Headquarters. She helps to assure that team members have the resources and information they need, and monitors and balances their caseloads.

While Wellhausen uses her experience to have an impact on the national level, she remembers the satisfaction that came from working for her branch. "I still miss being a steward," she said. "I liked putting all the pieces together. It's like a puzzle."

Working in Washington, DC, is never boring, she said, owing to all the news-making events such as demonstrations, presidential inaugurations or motorcades that happen right outside the Headquarters building, which is located a block from the U.S. Capitol. Still, leaving home and work behind involves personal sacrifice for any carrier who relocates to Washington.



**Geneva Kubal.** Geneva began carrying mail in 1988. She held several union offices for Minneapolis Branch 9 and the Minnesota State Association before coming to Washington, DC. Geneva joined the Headquarters staff in 2010 and works in the CAU.

**Jamie Lumm.** NALC Director of Education Jamie Lumm arrived at Headquarters in 2009 following five years as Region 2 RAA. He carried his first satchel in 1978. Jamie is a member of Kent, WA Branch 2038.



**Brian Renfroe.** The Hattiesburg, MS Branch 938 member served as president of his branch and the Mississippi State Association before arriving at Headquarters to put his knowledge to work in 2011 for the CAU.

**Sue Wellhausen.** Sue started carrying the mail in 1988. After a stint as steward and vice president of Eugene, OR Branch 916, she became a Step B representative. She came to Headquarters in 2008 to work in the CAU.



“I miss the West Coast,” she said. “I miss the weather, and the West Coast sports teams. And I miss the customers.”

Collins also gets back to his old post office sometimes, which keeps him in touch with old friends and with the everyday concerns of letter carriers. “It’s always great to walk on the back dock and see the people you’ve worked with,” he said.

For many, coming to work at National offers new opportunities and challenges, but they are still working

for, and with, other letter carriers. “You miss where you’re from,” Renfroe said. “You miss the people you work with. But it’s almost like having a second family here.”

“We’re lucky that these brothers and sisters agreed to pull up their roots, come to Washington, DC, and apply their know-how and experience full time for the good of the union,” President Rolando said. “I know that they, like everyone working at Headquarters, are here to make NALC the best union it can be.” **PR**

## Recent additions to the NALC staff

**H**eadquarters has welcomed several new staff members recently.

**Jermaine Foreman** was hired as an accounts payable clerk in the Finance Department. He comes to NALC after working for the Washington, DC, Metro transit system.

**Jim Holland** is NALC’s new research director. He comes to NALC from the United Auto Workers, where he provided research to support organizing and contract negotiation. Jim left the corporate world for a new career working for labor unions because he wanted to fight for fairness in the workplace for America’s working families.

**Nina Kunkel** is the new secretary for the Retirement Department. She previously worked for the National Association of Police Organizations.

**Tracey O’Brien** is the new secretary in the CAU. Tracey last worked at the Bakery, Confectionery, Tobacco Workers and Grain Millers Union. Her father was a letter carrier in the Washington, DC, area.

**Nahid Sepehri** was hired in December 2012 to assist the director of human resources and the assistant secretary-treasurer. She previously taught chemistry and worked with emotionally disabled students in Fairfax County, VA public schools. A native of Iran, Nahid moved to the United States as a teenager in 1978.

Born and raised in Washington, DC, **Shannon Ward** is a new senior accountant in the Finance Department. She previously worked as an accountant for a government contractor. **PR**