

Planting seeds



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I t's that time of year to plant seeds and watch things grow. Along these lines, we just completed the second of four arbitration advocate training sessions we are conducting this year. Each class is composed of 16 participants, four facilitators, four mock arbitrators and me.

We cover all aspects of the arbitration process, from review of the file, research, witness interviews and preparation, written/oral opening statements, direct and cross-examination to written/oral closing arguments and a whole lot more during a span of six days. This class is a lot of work and a challenging experience for the participants who go

through it. I can report that every participant thus far has been up for it.

Each participant applies what they learn by preparing and presenting two mock arbitration cases before our arbitrators by the end of the week. We use files from grievances that were actually heard at arbitration. The "arbitrators" are experienced NALC advocates who know their way around the hearing room. They provide insightful tips to our new advocates during and after the mock arbitration hearings.

At the end of every session, we ask each participant to fill out an anonymous exit survey to seek perspective from their point of view on how to make improvements to our training program. Our goal for the arbitration advocacy project is to take a really good training program and turn it into a great one.

I want to take this opportunity to thank the 48 participants who already have attended, and the 16 who will have attended this training shortly after this issue hits your mailbox, for all your efforts. There was a lot asked of each of you during your week with us. Every single one of you did a great job!

I also want to thank Shawn Boyd, Greg Dixon, Jamie Lumm and Mark Sims for serving as facilitators, and Ron Brown, Pete Goodman, Stephen Hult, Jim Korolowicz, Mary Martinez, Charlie Miller, Barry Weiner, Jim Williams and Tom Young for serving as arbitrators during our arbitration advocate training sessions and for a job well done.

We will complete this project shortly after you read this. We will have planted 64 arbitration advocate seeds. I can't wait to see how y'all grow.

Now that we have done something for the beginning of the grievance procedure with the *NALC Shop Steward's*

Guide/DVD toolkit and the end of the grievance procedure with the arbitration advocate training sessions, it is time to work on the middle steps.

To that end, our next grievance procedure training project will be designed to offer participants a combination of advanced Formal Step A, pre-Step B representative, and pre-arbitration advocate training. The intent is for this combination to enhance and expand knowledge at the local level for today and plant Step B representative and arbitration advocate seeds for tomorrow at the same time.

As of this writing, this new training course is under construction and we are still developing the curriculum. We don't even have a name for this class yet, but we have a pretty good idea of what subjects we want to cover.

I think we will end up with a five- or six-day training course by the time we get this whole program together. The expenses associated with attending this training will have to be absorbed by the branches that decide to send participants, and it will be offered on a first-come, first-served basis. I plan to do my best to make it a worthwhile investment.

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The plan right now is to present this training course at the Maritime Institute just outside of Baltimore, beginning sometime in September. The number of these classes offered will depend on the number of activists who express an interest in attending.

We will have a preview of this new training course to present as one of the classes that will be offered to the delegates at the national rap session in Houston this July.

I'll report on this again after the curriculum, size and length, as well as the name of the new training course, is finalized.

In closing, I want to wish those of you who are mothers a happy Mother's Day, and to thank everyone for all the extra work you did for the Food Drive.