



Branch 256 carrier Terry Bloodworth stocks up on water before he leaves the Flint Northwest Annex for street duties.

Water safety a concern for carriers in Flint, MI

On Jan. 28, city carrier assistant and newly certified steward Nicholas Escobar and his wife welcomed their first child, daughter Hadassah, into the world. Having a new child can be stressful by itself, but it's been even more difficult for the Escobars because they live in Flint, MI, and are fearful of the tap water they use every day.

"We are warming up Hadassah's bath water in the microwave using bottled water," the Mid-Michigan Branch 256 member said. "I bought the biggest glass bowl I could fit in our microwave. We set her in her baby bath tub and just take a wash cloth and use the water from the bowl to wash her."

Escobar also said his family consumes only bottled water, but that has its own problems, as residents of the city are limited to one case per visit to a free distribution point. All the while, the price of the contaminated tap water has only gone up.

"My water bill was \$42 every month, every year," Escobar said. "All of a sudden, my water bill skyrocketed to \$70, then \$90, then this past fall it was \$109. So not only are we paying for water we can't drink but we are paying more than cities like Las Vegas where they are in the middle of the desert!"

As has been widely reported, Flint's water problems began in early 2014 when the city changed its water source from water piped from Lake Huron by the Detroit Water and Sewage Department to water from the Flint River. Contaminants in the corrosive Flint River water caused lead from aging pipes to leach into

the water supply, elevating dangerous lead levels. Municipal mismanagement ignored the problem, and political leaders told people the water was safe. The result has been outbreaks of serious health issues including lead poisoning and perhaps even Legionnaires' disease. In recent months, there has been an outpouring of anger at the government officials in charge as well as of charity from all over, with donated bottled water and money going to the residents of Flint.

In some postal stations, portable wash units were brought in until the Health Department announced that



the tap water there was safe to wash with. Stations also have bottles of water for carriers to take with them on their routes in the city, as the water fountains in the city should not be used.

"We're trying to find the best game plan to deal with this," Branch 256 President Paul Gillie said. He has been coordinating with postal management to make sure the carriers

are safe. He also has been dealing with the United Way to make sure that donations from NALC and other union members get to those in need. “This isn’t going to go away overnight,” he said, “so we’re trying to get the resources together, and the best way seems to be a group response.”

Gillie asked that NALC members donate money as opposed to bottles of water, to make sure the resources go where they’re needed, such as to the purchase of water filters. Members can send donations to the United Way of Genesee County electronically at unitedwaygenesee.org/give or mail a donation to United Way of Genesee County, 111 East Court St., Suite 3A, Flint, MI 48502 and write “Water Fund” on the memo line of the check. United Way is handling the funds with no administrative fees/costs (100 percent of the proceeds go to the community).

One of the most heartwarming stories to come out of the Flint crisis has been the hundreds of union pipefitters who have installed filters for free. Where the faucets have been too old for the filters to fit properly, the union plumbers have replaced the faucets for free, too.

Gillie said that most of the carriers have dealt with the situation ably and are often more concerned for the poor and elderly on their routes. “We care about the people in our community,” he said. **PR**



Flint postal workers used portable wash stations like this for about a week before the Department of Health said that the tap water was safe to wash with.

Deadlines set for national convention

Delagate eligibility lists for the 70th biennial national convention in Los Angeles have been mailed to all branches. The lists must be completed and returned to Secretary-Treasurer Nicole Rhine’s office at NALC Headquarters no later than June 15 in order for branch representatives to be registered as delegates to the convention. The convention is set for Aug. 15-19.

All proposed amendments to the *NALC Constitution* to be submitted for consideration at the convention must be received by Rhine’s office by June 15. That date is 60 days in advance of the convention, as prescribed by the *Constitution*. Proposed amendments

will appear in this July’s *Postal Record* for the membership to review.

Resolutions to be considered by delegates also must be received by the June 15 deadline in order to be printed in the *Resolutions and Amendments* book provided to delegates. Resolutions received after June 15 still may be considered at the convention.

Branches wishing to sell items in the designated branch sales area during the convention must contact Rhine’s office no later than April 18 to secure guidelines and forms. The completed forms must be returned to Headquarters by May 2.

Go to nalc.org for more convention news. **PR**

