

Training new activists



**Brian
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Prior to 2013, our membership was a very experienced one overall with very few letter carriers hired after 2007 and most hired in the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s. Since the city carrier assistant (CCA) classification was created in 2013, and the subsequent conversions of more than 45,000 CCAs to full-time career status, around 75,000 of our 292,000 members have worked for the Postal Service for fewer than 10 years, with close to 65,000 of them with fewer than four years of experience.

Naturally, our membership has gotten younger with this influx of new members over the last few years. This changed dynamic creates a great opportunity to use the skills that our newer members bring to the table. While many of them may lack experience right now, giving them the opportunity to utilize their skill sets is essential.

In January 2016, NALC hosted a city carrier assistant (CCA) conference in St. Louis. Nearly 200 letter carriers, each from different branches around the country, gathered

together for three days of training and in-depth discussions on various topics affecting CCA letter carriers and their jobs. This conference included a rap session with President Rolando, training on the structure and history of NALC, a review of the history of the non-career workforce, an overview of our legislative and political activities, a look at the grievance/arbitration process and many more issues that letter carriers face daily. I remember feeling incredibly impressed by the passion, dedication and energy displayed by those who attended the conference.

We continue to see many branches and state associations work to develop these newer members. More and more of our newer members are stepping up and serving their branches and state associations. I am impressed by the recognition of the need and the willingness of our branches to develop activists. It's been said by many successful leaders that “if you're not training someone to take your place, you're not doing your job.” The work that our branches and state associations are doing embodies that statement.

From Headquarters, we want to be sure we provide opportunities for continued training and development of these members. Over the last couple of years, we have steadily increased the training offered by Headquarters, from branch officer training to intense training on grievance handling in the “Formal Step A and Beyond” class. In the near future, we plan to give branches the opportunity to send select newer members to a week-long training conducted by NALC officers and staff. The intent will be to give those who have become involved and shown potential the opportunity to learn more about NALC as a whole and develop certain skills that will be beneficial to them, no matter what role they choose to take on now and in the future. Information on the first such class will be made available to branches very soon.

Our union's long history of success is a credit to our past and present members, and to leaders at all levels. The small group who gathered in 1889 to form our union was eventually replaced by other leaders, and that has continued for 125-plus years. We owe it to our current and future members to work to recruit and develop activists to continue to serve our members, just as the thousands of men and women who have represented letter carriers for more than 125 years did before us.