

An evolving NALC Auxiliary



Community and Membership Outreach Coordinator Pam Donato

The National Association of Letter Carriers Auxiliary (NALCA) was organized in September 1905 with the general purpose of promoting the objectives of NALC and supporting its charities. More than a century later, NALCA continues to evolve and change to meet the needs of letter carriers.

NALCA's start was as the "National Ladies Auxiliary," first established by the wives, daughters, mothers and sisters of letter carriers who, because of those relationships, were

interested in letter carrier issues.

As it grew, it became a strong public advocate on behalf of letter carriers. NALCA pushed issues such as general pay increases and work-hour guarantees for "substitutes."

Remember: Before the Great Postal Strike of 1970, pay and benefits for letter carriers were controlled by Congress. Letter carriers needed a voice in the place where decisions were made, as in the early part of the 20th century, carriers were bound by a so-called "gag rule" imposed by President Theodore Roosevelt. Even speaking to a congressman could jeopardize a carrier's job under this gag rule.

Enter the Auxiliary, a megaphone for supporting letter carriers beyond the reach of the federal government. And even though women didn't have the right to vote for 20 years after NALCA was founded, the collective voice of the women of the Auxiliary was nevertheless heard in Washington.

Yes, more than 112 years later, things have changed. We now have the right to bargain collectively and to negotiate over a lot of issues involving pay and benefits. So NALCA's work evolved to support letter carriers' legislative issues. And beyond all of that legislative work, the Auxiliary also supports the Muscular Dystrophy Association (MDA), NALC's only official charity.

NALCA has grown to meet whatever NALC needs, locally and nationally. During its last national convention in Los Angeles (held the same week and location as NALC's national convention), the Auxiliary voted to expand in their bylaws eligibility for NALCA membership—to include not just letter carrier spouses, but also family members, significant others and friends (over the age of 16) of active or retired NALC members. Retired letter carriers in good membership standing with NALC also are eligible for NALCA membership.

It's not just NALCA's membership base that's expanding; so too is the Auxiliary's work. You can find several Auxiliary locals where they raise funds year-round to provide annual scholarships to children of local letter carriers. NALCA in the state of Washington, for example, recently collected warm

winter wear such as hats, gloves and coats and donated them to homeless veterans.

In Missouri, the Auxiliary works hard on projects to boost the morale of letter carriers by hosting an annual appreciation dinner for those attending branch membership meetings. Like other auxiliaries, they also work on issue campaigns, public petition drives and participate in informational pickets—all to promote letter carrier-friendly legislative efforts.

And yes, auxiliaries are expert fundraisers for worthy causes, especially for MDA. If it's important to the NALC, the Auxiliary is the first in line to raise its hand and dig in to support.

Having a group like NALCA at our side is incredibly valuable—trusted and loyal longtime *friends and family*, who act in the best interests of letter carriers.

The Auxiliary now refers to itself as the "Friends and Family of Letter Carriers," a fitting reference to the organization's expanding role and work. And in this symbiotic relationship, it's vital that letter carriers work with their local Auxiliary chapters to find ways for NALCA to support local letter carriers.

"In this symbiotic relationship, it's vital that letter carriers work with their local Auxiliary chapters to find ways for NALCA to support local letter carriers."

Community outreach? *Done.* Help with legislative issues? *Check.* Assisting new letter carriers, newly retired letter carriers, those in need? *Can do.* All you have to do is ask.

When we think of our own most trusted friends, they often come from within our family. The same thing is true in organizations, and that is the case with NALCA: our "Friends and Family of Letter Carriers."

To learn more about NALCA/Friends and Family of Letter Carriers, or to sign up with the NALCA chapter nearest you, visit nalc.org/nalca.