

Selection process underway for Leadership Academy 2018



Director of Education
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Another round of the NALC Leadership Academy applications has been received and the challenging process of selecting the next class of 30 students is underway. As of the writing of this article, President Fredric Rolando and Executive Vice President Brian Renfro were reviewing the many applications that were sent in from around the country by NALC activists eager to enhance their knowledge and skills. It's not an easy job

to choose just 30 students out of the many qualified applicants.

The Leadership Academy held its first class in July 2005 and looking over the roster of graduates from that class is like looking at a list of current leaders in NALC. Names like Kevin Card, who now works at NALC Headquarters as the assistant to the president for Compensation; Joe Henschen, president of West Coast Florida Branch 1477; Tony Hutson, Region 3 RAA; Ron Kania, president of Milwaukee Branch 2; Stafford Price, treasurer of Chicago Branch 11; Antonia Shields, president of Birmingham, AL Branch 530 and president of the Alabama State Association; and Chris Wittenburg, NBA Region 7, just to name a few of the 30 who graduated with that initial class.

And the same can be found looking through rosters of each of the subsequent 21 classes that have graduated over the past 13 years. Twenty-three of the 35 regional administrative assistants, nine of the 13 NALC Headquarters staff and 19 of 49 state presidents are also graduates, not to mention two national business agents (Wittenburg and Michael Caref) and Executive Vice President Brian Renfro. And as proud as we are of their accomplishments, we are just as proud of those who have used the knowledge and skills they gained at the Academy to take on leadership roles at the local level, serving as stewards, officers and activists in their home branches—the backbone of NALC.

This year, 196 applications were received at NALC Headquarters during the Jan. 1 to Feb. 28 open season; 116 were first-time applicants. That fact is encouraging on many levels. It shows that interest among members in becoming more active and being of greater service to the union remains high. It also shows that, in spite of not being selected in previous attempts, those 80 who reapplied remained determined and were not easily discouraged, both characteristics of a good leader.

One very encouraging statistic is that 35 percent of this year's applicants are female, up from 23 percent just six years ago. This closely mirrors the current per-

centage of female members in NALC. While the “good ol’ boy” network still exists out there in some locations, it is clear that more and more women are stepping up into leadership positions in NALC and mentoring other women to follow in their footsteps. This is just one more reason to be proud to be a member of this union.

Another point gleaned from the application pool is that 45 percent (89) of the 196 applicants have been letter carriers for just five years or less, which means that they began their postal employment as CCAs and some of them still are. It doesn't seem like it was that long ago when, in January 2013, during the first week of Leadership Academy Class 15, the Das interest arbitration award was released and the students and instructors all first read about this new letter carrier classification called city carrier assistant. We discussed what this might mean for the future of letter carriers and NALC.

“Forty-three percent of the carrier workforce is made up of those who were hired as CCAs, nearly the same percentage as are Academy applicants.”

Here we are just five years later and 43 percent of the carrier workforce is made up of those who were hired as CCAs, nearly the same percentage as are Academy applicants. In spite of what some might claim, CCAs have not been unwilling to step up to the plate and take leadership roles within their branches, states, and even at national levels. This, I believe, is due in no small part to the efforts and programs at every level of NALC to organize and include CCAs. So rather than feeling vulnerable to the whims of an uncaring and often unpredictable management, CCAs have found empowerment and security by belonging to and becoming active in their union, and they now seek to pass this on to others.

I guess a big takeaway from this is that, of the 196 applicants, 143 of them chose Leadership Academy graduates to be their mentors. This is quite encouraging as it indicates that the graduates have taken to heart the pay-it-forward message of Week 3 of the Academy and are seen by their fellow members as persons they can depend upon for leadership, advice and support. As has been said before, true leaders don't create followers, they create more leaders, who in turn create more leaders.