

Opportunities to get involved start with you

Joining NALC allows you to become part of a group of hundreds of thousands of dedicated letter carriers, united to protect their jobs and their rights, and to promote the safety and welfare of the members. These common goals create a strength and solidarity that allow NALC to achieve great things for letter carriers.

However, for some members, all they can see of the union is what the shop steward does on the workroom floor. While enforcement of the contract is extremely important, it's not the only way members can participate in achieving our common goals.

NALC offers members a variety of additional activities and opportunities to get involved that they might not typically think about. Here are some of the ways carriers can actively participate with their branch, in and outside of the workplace.

If you like to write or are interested in communications, branches often are looking for writers and editors to help with the branch newsletter, or even to start one. If you're technologically savvy, many branches have started, or want to start, a website, blog or social media group, allowing you to put your skills to good use. Some branches have begun using virtual platforms, podcasts or video presentations to provide information to members—maybe your technical skills extend to cameras, lighting or audio equipment.

Many branches also promote fellowship and solidarity among branch members and their families by offering a variety of social activities. If you like to socialize, you could volunteer to help organize an activity such as a branch picnic, a trip to a baseball game or a holiday event. These group events offer members a fun, easy way

to interact with NALC brothers and sisters and to contribute.

Letter carriers are generous and dedicated to serving their communities beyond providing reliable, efficient and courteous mail delivery service. If you enjoy giving back to your community, you might consider participating when your branch engages in charitable activities such as raising funds for the Muscular Dystrophy Association (MDA). NALC embraced the MDA as its official charity in 1952, becoming the first national sponsor of the organization just two years after its founding. Members can participate in a variety of events to raise money for MDA, such as bow-lathons, satchel drives or Muscle Walks.

NALC's biggest charitable effort every year is the Letter Carriers' Stamp Out Hunger Food Drive, held annually on the second Saturday in May. The nationwide food drive typically collects more than 70 million pounds of food nationwide to help stock local pantries, shelters and church shelves, helping feed the tens of millions of Americans who lack sufficient food, including millions of elderly, children and military veterans. NALC partners with various organizations to carry out the nation's largest single-day food drive. Since its beginning in 1993, the food drive has collected more than 1.75 billion pounds of food.

Unfortunately, in 2021—for the second consecutive year—the pandemic forced the cancellation of our traditional food drive even as the need for assistance is more significant than ever, given the economic impact of the pandemic. Members still can participate in NALC's efforts to fight hunger by supporting the 2021 Stamp Out Hunger Donor Drive, which provides members the opportunity to contribute

directly to a food bank in your community. Visit nalc.org/food for more information. If your branch has a food drive coordinator, he or she would likely appreciate any assistance you'd like to give; if your branch doesn't have one, you could take on that role and give back to your community.

In 2018, to provide support and relief to members affected by natural disasters, including earthquakes, tornadoes, hurricanes and wildfires, the union established the NALC Disaster Relief Foundation. The foundation was established to fill a need identified by many branches that were affected by natural disasters the previous year, including several hurricanes and tornadoes that ravaged the Gulf Coast. Branches wanted to know where they could send desperately needed supplies and money, but there wasn't a central location. NALC set up this foundation to make it easy for them to help others in need quickly and efficiently. The foundation has the capacity to accept donations and provide assistance. Additionally, basic supplies including uniforms, water and food will be available for those who need them in the future.

Another way carriers can serve their communities is by participating in Carrier Alert. Carrier Alert is a cooperative community service program that monitors the well-being of elderly or disabled mail patrons. As one of the few—and some days only—point of human contact for homebound patrons, letter carriers are particularly attuned to signs that could indicate an accident or illness. When a participating carrier notes something unusual involving a patron registered with Carrier Alert, he or she reports it to a postal supervisor or other designated individual,

who in turn contacts the sponsoring local agency. The agency checks on the person, and if something is wrong, contacts relatives, police or emergency services as appropriate. To find out if there is a Carrier Alert program in your community, contact your local NALC branch office or post office.

For more information on MDA, the Stamp Out Hunger Food Drive, the NALC Disaster Relief Foundation or Carrier Alert, visit nalc.org/community-service.

If politics is your passion, there are opportunities to come face to face with your congressional representatives to tell them about the importance of issues that affect letter carriers and the Postal Service. Many branches have letter carrier congressional liaisons who communicate frequently with their senators and representatives throughout the year. Meanwhile, NALC state associations are crucial to our legislative efforts. Participation with your state association will provide you with training and information on local and statewide political efforts. Sometimes, branches will organize phone banking or text-messaging initiatives that allow letter carriers to reach out to voters to educate them on legislative activity that could have an impact on the Postal Service or the community.

Also, there may be opportunities to assist your branch as a Letter Carrier Political Fund (LCPF) coordinator helping to educate other letter carriers about the LCPF and political activity on Capitol Hill involving the Postal Service. Learn more about NALC's legislative efforts by visiting nalc.org/government-affairs.

Military veterans constitute about one-fifth of the membership of NALC. These veterans traded their



military uniforms for letter carrier uniforms, and they continue to serve their communities and this great nation. In 2015, NALC created the NALC Veterans Group to provide members—active full-time and part-time letter carriers, as well as retired letter carriers—with relevant information, resources and a sense of camaraderie. In addition, veterans have a strong voice when they contact their senators and representatives about postal legislation.

Some branches have set up dedicated positions for the purpose of assisting branch members with veteran-related issues. NALC members who fill these positions often are veterans themselves, as well as members of the NALC Veterans Group—and use information and resources from the group to assist their fellow branch members. If this type of work interests you, inquire with your branch representatives about how to get involved. If your branch doesn't currently have such a dedicated position, you could discuss the possibility of establishing one—and perhaps even serving in the role.

Engaging in community service, branch events and political activities, along with assisting veterans, are just some of the ways you and your family can get involved. All you need to do is ask.

Getting involved in NALC usually starts in one simple way: by attending your branch meetings. Monthly branch meetings can provide you with information about all of these activities and about the ways you can lend a hand. As it has with many things, the pandemic has forced us to alter the way we conduct business on the local, regional and national level. For some branches, this means changing the time and location of meetings or conducting the meetings virtually via an online platform. If you need details about your branch meetings, seek out your shop steward or call a branch officer.

For more about opportunities to get involved, please see the *NALC Letter Carrier Resource Guide* on the website at nalc.org/resourceguide as well as in the forthcoming July edition of *The Postal Record*.

NALC encourages you to get involved with the union in whatever way you choose. “For tens of thousands of letter carriers, participating in the NALC is simply a great way to help strengthen the one organization dedicated solely to protecting carriers’ interests in the workplace and in the halls of Congress,” NALC President Fredric Rolando said. “Find out how you can get involved.” **PR**