

Communications gumbo, Cajun flavor



**Philip
Dine**

Gerald Soileau, past president of Lafayette, LA Branch 1760, wasn't feeling great that Saturday morning some 15 months ago, but something told him to go to work. Once there, he heard a thunderous explosion outside. A plane had crashed and turned the area into a fiery cauldron.

Two survivors owe their lives to the presence of Soileau, a 10-year Air Force veteran accustomed to fighter jets and other aircraft, to remaining calm in a crisis, and to acting swiftly when necessary.

Talk about a man for the job.

Soileau was named Central Region Hero among NALC's 2020 National Heroes of the Year. As you read in

December, also honored were Grand Junction, CO Branch 913 member Pedro Mendoza, National Hero; Cincinnati Branch 43's Jerry Giesting, Humanitarian Hero; Champaign, IL Branch 671's Matthew King, Carrier Alert winner; Oklahoma City Branch 458 members Eric Beu and Mark Simone, Unit Citation winners; Garden Grove, CA Branch 1100's Chyanne Fauntleroy, Western Hero; and former Buffalo-Western New York Branch 3 member Sydney Rodgers, Eastern Hero.

They, and other carriers who act courageously or compassionately, aren't seeking attention. You do so because that's who you are and how you approach the job. That said, such deeds and the resulting coverage help get our message out. They add to the public's appreciation of letter carriers—in turn making residents and their representatives more receptive to our cause on Capitol Hill. They also demonstrate the value of door delivery six days a week. A recent press release about the winners will likely spark additional media interest by the time you read this.

Many of you communicated NALC's message in more typical fashion recently. Some highlights: Tamara Twinn of Centennial Branch 5996 in Colorado and Benjamin Dixon of Detroit Branch 1 were featured in a riveting CNN segment on letter carriers on the route; Chicago Branch 11 President Mack Julion and Kansas State President Andy Tuttle gave insightful interviews on Chicago and Kansas City radio, respectively; a "Thank a Letter Carrier Day" story in Florida's second-largest paper relied heavily on comments from Central Florida Branch 1091 President Rick Myers; Region 12 National Business Agent Brian Thompson was quoted in Pennsylvania's third-largest newspaper; Maine Merged Branch 92's Frank Bove had a union solidarity letter in Maine's largest newspaper; former Idaho State President John Paige wrote several letters to Idaho newspapers.

Jeffrey Hollins communicates in another medium—that of film (see page 20). He delivers action on the screen and recounts related stories to his co-workers.

The Marrero, LA Branch 4323 member has communicated something else as well—caring and compassion—by teaching film to at-risk youth early in his film career. Jeff was told that the youngsters "would love to see a young Black guy... just starting out in film, and I had a film that was playing in the area," he says. "I really enjoyed doing it. I was real proud of them, and proud I was trusted enough to teach them."

His cultural contributions, and those of other Bayou State carriers, don't surprise Monica Walker, Region 8 regional administrative assistant and past Louisiana state president. As she puts it: "The life of a lot of letter carriers around New Orleans has to do with music or film or other arts."

Continuing with the Louisiana theme, in October 2007 I addressed the International Labor Communications Association's annual convention. New Orleans was still devastated by Katrina; it was a fascinating time to be there. Moreover, I gained great respect for ILCA's work.

At the time, I didn't know that I'd leave daily journalism a year later, after writing about labor for a quarter-century, including labor's travails in getting its message out. Nor did I have any idea that soon after putting aside my reporter's notepad I'd be editing this magazine and managing NALC's efforts to, well, get our message out.

So, I'm gratified that ILCA recently recognized *The Postal Record* as one of the labor movement's premier publications. For the second year in a row (NALC rejoined ILCA last year after more than a decade's absence), the magazine received multiple writing awards in ILCA's labor media contest (see page 9).

If you enjoy reading this magazine each month and feel informed by it, please know that its quality reflects the talent and dedication of the communications staff members mentioned below, Mike, Rick, Jenessa and Clare; the contributions of letter carriers at Headquarters who pitch in; and the commitment of NALC's leadership.

They do this because you—who contribute so much to the customers on your route, the communities you deliver in and the country you serve—deserve nothing less.

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