

One-two punch



Philip Dine

NALC's success in changing the national conversation on postal issues, which helps everything else our union seeks to do, is predicated on the interaction between external and internal communications—or, to complement what's above with another sports metaphor, an inside-outside game.

Letter carriers, from rank-and-file members to local activists, branch officers to state leaders, national business agents to resident officers at Headquarters, have, for years, managed to effectively get our message out, locally and nationally, in print, on television or radio, and online. Your efforts have been consistent, they have been impressive—and they have informed the public, the politicians and the press about the real story regarding postal finances, the value of the postal network and the valor of letter carriers. You have focused like a laser on the facts, the context and the needed reforms.

That's the outside game, the external component. The inside game, the internal aspect, involves the magazine you are holding, as well as other NALC vehicles for communicating with you. When the various departments here deliver to you up-to-date information on legislative or other matters, discuss the union's goals and strategies, dissect postal finances or depict significant achievements by branches or individual letter carriers around the country, it facilitates your efforts to inform the public through the media.

Rarely has this symbiotic relationship been more evident than in recent months. First, the external side of things.

The very day I'm writing this column, Dec. 12, Kevin Boyer, president of Columbia, MO Branch 763 and a former Missouri State Association president, is adding valuable perspective and a reassuring tone to a report by local NBC TV affiliate KOMU. He humanized the segment on mid-Missouri's public-sector workplaces during the pandemic, offered a glimpse into letter carriers' determination to get the mail out despite the challenges, and provided the "real-life perspective on my story" that the reporter sought. As is often the case, this reflected teamwork, with Region 5 NBA Michael Birkett suggesting Kevin for the role. (For the baseball fans out there; yes, Kevin is related to the outstanding trio of Major League brothers from the Show-Me state: Ken, Clete and Cloyd Boyer.)

Knowing when to comment, how to comment and, indeed, whether to comment requires some media savvy, and Baltimore Branch 176 President Mike Smith has displayed this recently more than once, to the benefit of our messaging ef-

forts. Mike is now busy helping mentor the trio of new branch leaders who will take the reins as he and his two fellow branch leaders retire; he will be departing after what he calls his "two careers," 27 years delivering the mail and 26 years as a full-time branch officer (the last 16 as president). The hope here is that he will stay in touch, both with his successors and with this magazine, lending some of that savvy.

President Rolando has continued his persistent efforts to inform the public and policymakers about postal issues, whether by interpreting the quarterly or annual USPS financial reports for outlets such as *Federal Times*, *Government Executive* and Federal News Network or by discussing legislative matters with *The Hill* or *Politico*—all of which are thoroughly consumed on Capitol Hill—while also getting NALC's voice out through national platforms such as the Associated Press and *Fortune*. He doesn't just comment, he explains and analyzes, and over the past decade, no union leader in the country has matched the reach or substance of his media engagement.

Obviously, these are just a few examples of the external side of things, before we turn to the inside game.

One of our functions in the Communications and Media Relations Department is to help your efforts to get out the message, in part by informing you through this magazine. That lends meaning to what we do here, and it's why we were gratified last month to see our efforts recognized by the International Labor Communications Association in the form of nine national awards presented to *The Postal Record*, as you'll read in the story on page 19.

This reflects the dedication and talent of the communications staff members listed below, Mike, Rick, Jenessa and Clare, as well as the valuable contributions of our social media duo, Chet Robinson and Madeline Alvis. It also stems from the support and the editing of President Rolando and Executive Vice President Brian Renfro, the input of staffers including Chief of Staff Jim Sauber and Director of Legislative and Political Affairs Kori Blalock Keller, as well as other national officers, staff members and letter carriers assigned to Headquarters or working elsewhere.

The two halves of the communications effort reinforce one another, and the results benefit us all.

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