

# A call for humane employee treatment



**Manuel L.  
Peralta Jr.**

**T**his month's column highlights a case in which management flipped the script after doing something positive.

I received the following message from Paul Gillie, past president of Mid-Michigan Branch 256. Paul has contributed to my column in the past. He is insightful and he cares.

...We have lost two carriers to suicide. One last month, one last weekend. Naturally, the employer paraded around the Employee Assistance counselors as some form of demonstration that they actually give a (...) about any one of us. But any suggestion that we are even remotely close to human beings instead of soulless automatons suffered an instant death as well.

Immediately after the EAP representative concluded her presentation, asking us to hold these individuals and their families in our hearts, the next words from management were harsh, assaulting, and abhorrent. I was too disheartened to catch the expression on the EAP representative's face as management took the floor, admonishing the entire group of carriers, stating that perhaps a small few were wasting time, deviating from their routes, or somehow tampering with the scanners that leave 'bread crumbs' for management to snort as they electronically track us from our letter cases, to the bathroom, to the 85-year-old patron's porch where she waits most days for the letter carrier to hand-deliver her mail because she is too frail to make it out to the mounted box at the street and back inside safely.

I used the word 'automaton' earlier because I still hear President Vince Sombrotto's voice from a quarter-century ago as he fought for us, and an article he wrote, stating then that we are letter carriers. We are human beings. We are not automatons. For three decades I have served the patrons, but never the minions who have been promoted solely through a collective leadership style of sickening Reverse Darwinism. As I have walked the equivalent of more than four times around the globe with a weighted satchel on my shoulder, I have watched our national officers' endless efforts as they try to improve the environment on the workroom floor. It seems that no torch can span the abyss.

Amid endless daily insults and accusations from reprehensible pseudoleaders, the collateral damage continues to mount. One death, one suicide, one broken soul or spirit at a time. To them, we are just numbers, and the numbers are never good enough – we are never good enough. To our families, friends, and the patrons who depend on us, we are still very much human and an integral part of this world. That is what we hold onto as we force ourselves through the workroom doors every day.

But we are hurting in ways that we cannot describe...

**The loss of a co-worker, a member of our work family,** is a painful event. Losing them to suicide is even more painful.

However, having a member of the management team destroy any goodwill on that day described above is devastating. While we try to process the loss and attempt to understand what happened, management lunges at us with a dagger in hand and destroys the efforts put on display a few minutes earlier.

To the managers running the USPS at the district and area level, you should be investigating the above and taking action. That is, if you care. To the power brokers at L'Enfant Plaza, this behavior runs against all that you promised in the 1992 Joint Statement on Violence and Behavior in the Workplace. While you all explore what it takes to elevate employee engagement, here's an idea.

Stop mistreating our craft employees. Read, learn and apply the commitments made in the Joint Statement to the supervisors you hire and through all promotions that follow. Quit breeding the anger and hate that ruins the work environment in so many work locations throughout the country. Mental health experts would help change the culture, so quit hiring prison guards to supervise our employees.

EAP services are intended to be a benefit negotiated into our national agreement, providing for assessment, short-term counseling, training and improving mental health well-being. Quit ignoring this plea from our craft.

Article 35 of our National Agreement provides for a robust Employee Assistance Program (EAP). Our current EAP Services Provider is New Directions Behavioral Health. Connect with them whichever way is easiest for you:

- Phone—1-800-EAP4YOU (800-327-4968)
- TTY—877-492-7341
- Web—EAP4You.com

**In closing, I bring to your attention an Occupational Health and Safety Administration (OSHA) initiative that led to the creation of the *Supporting Mental Health in the Workplace - Getting Started Guide for Front-Line Supervisors*.**

You can find this checklist at [https://www.osha.gov/sites/default/files/Getting\\_Started-Supervisor\\_508.pdf](https://www.osha.gov/sites/default/files/Getting_Started-Supervisor_508.pdf).

Can you imagine how much better our work environment would be if this were adopted?

Let's help each other while we keep an eye on each