



Breast cancer awareness



**Mack I.
Julion**

I have often stated that "some of my best ideas come from other people." It's my way of encouraging the thoughts, input and involvement of others around me and the general membership of our union. There is no big "I" or little "you" in our union, because at the end of the day we are all simply letter carriers. It's the things we do collectively that make our union great.

Every October I am reminded of one such idea that "I had," which came from other members. It was brought to me at the most unlikely time and from those members from whom I would least expect it. To my credit, I was at least

open-minded enough to listen and willing to follow through to see if it was doable and beneficial to the rest of our membership.

The conversation started as we were completing a rally and marching to draw attention to postal reform. Our objective was to march on President Obama's residence in Chicago and let him know that the inaction of his administration and of Congress concerning the pre-funding burden could have a negative impact on the workforce and constituents of his hometown. Putting this together itself was a big deal. No regular permit for this. With 24-hour Secret Service protection for the president, we agreed that our march would get no closer than a block away from his home to get the approval. We had a larger-than-expected turnout, particularly from those who rarely get involved. At the end of the rally, it was two of those rarely involved who approached me about the idea of a breast cancer walk.

Initially I thought they were seeking our branch participation in one of the many breast cancers walks that is held during the month of October. Their idea was much more ambitious than that. They envisioned that we could have our own walk! We would create it, get the participation of our members and maybe others in the labor movement.

The first thing I thought was, "OK, that's a lot of work!" So, I told them if they did the leg work and gave me a proposal, we would take a serious look at it. They did all of that. We then identified the area in the

neighborhood for the walk. It would begin and end at our facility, then culminate in a brunch. The board and members were receptive to the idea, so we secured a permit. At the very least, we figured we could do this one event, but it was a huge success!

There were so many members who participated. I was shocked. Members I never saw at our union hall. Our hall was adorned in pink; in fact, there was pink everywhere. We tapped into something that resonated with our members and made their union relevant to them. The atmosphere was vibrant, joyful and emotional. At the time my wife and mom were survivors, but there were so many others that I was not aware of.

This walk was in no way meant to take away from our national charity, the Muscular Dystrophy Association. We would still have many fundraisers for that, but I believe it lets our members know that we are sensitive to the issues that impact them, and we can meet them where they are. Breast cancer is one of those issues. It accounts for 30 percent of all new cancer cases in woman, according to breastcancer.org. Roughly 1 in 8 women will be diagnosed with breast cancer at some point in their life, so awareness is important.

I can proudly say that it was not a one-time event. This year will be the 13th Anniversary Walk for Branch 11, and in that time, we have raised more than \$200,000 for the American Cancer Society. We have also won several local awards for our participation as an organization. Above is a picture from our first walk and the flyer for this year's event. Unfortunately, I won't be there, but I will send my donation.

Yvette West and LaTonya Jackson were the carriers who approached me with the idea; and today, our MBA Representative Sheila Hudson and her committee keep it going. Over the years the turnout has somewhat dwindled, but their spirit hasn't. The event includes guest speakers and information concerning detection and treatment.

We have our own cancer walk, and it is regularly supported by other branches and labor unions in the Chicago area. It is also, by far, one of the best ideas "I" ever had.

