

Indiana AFL-CIO chapter names award after letter carrier

The Northeast Indiana Chapter of the AFL-CIO in February named its Lifetime Achievement Award after late letter carrier **Allen Lauer** of Fort Wayne, IN Branch 116, who was a 2023 recipient of the award.

After serving in the U.S. Air Force for five years, where he received the U.S. Air Force Outstanding Unit Citation, Lauer was hired by the Postal Service as a city letter carrier in May 1967 and was a letter carrier for 31 years. A gold card member of NALC, he served as Branch 116 president for 11 years, a congressional district liaison starting in 1974, served on the Indiana State Association of Letter Carriers board for 25 years (six as president), coordinated the branch's food drive for many years, and was also a Muscular Dystrophy Association volunteer.

Indiana State Association of Letter Carriers President **Yatzie Roysden** had known Lauer for 20 years and went to Washington, DC, with him on lobbying trips. "We are very proud of him," he said. "He's always been one to lend a hand—always."

Lauer, who died in June 2025 at 84, was described by colleagues as a dedicated union member known for his advocacy, for which he received many accolades and awards, including the Circle of Corydon in 2019, which recognizes community advocacy throughout Indiana.

In addition to postal endeavors, Lauer served on the board of directors for United Senior Action of Indiana, two as state president. He also served as president of the local chapter National Active and Retired Federal Employees (NARFE) since January 1998 and served as the NARFE state legislative chair for state and federal legislative issues for eight years. Lauer



Allen Lauer receives the 2023 Lifetime Achievement Award.

served on the Senior Advisory Council for Area 3 Aging and In Home Services from 2008.

"I think I've known Allen my entire postal career," said Branch 116 member **Robbie Gardiner**, who had been friends with Lauer for 50 years. "He was a great leader, and he was a great

mentor." During the decade that Lauer was branch president, Gardiner served as branch secretary and trustee.

"He was active at the branch all the way up to the month before he died," Gardiner said, adding that Lauer attended all the AFL-CIO meetings and gave a report to the branch. "He

worked the polls for every election—primary and general election. He was instrumental on our food drive [and] chaired the food drive probably four of the last seven years of the food drive.”

Lauer was part of the Northeast Indiana AFL-CIO labor chapter of the Hoosier Heartland Labor Federation. About eight years ago, the federation decided to start an annual awards banquet to recognize what labor does in the community all year long.

“At the time that we started working on it, we decided to do a Lifetime Achievement Award. And we didn’t really have a specific person or name in mind when we first developed the award,” said Lloyd Osbourne, president of both the Hoosier Heartland Labor Federation and its Northeast Indiana AFL-CIO chapter. “So, we just, year after year, gave it out to certain people that would come to mind, and the executive board would vote on it.”

Lauer won the AFL-CIO Hoosier Heartland Area Labor Federation’s local chapter’s 2023 Lifetime Achievement Award at its Excellence in Labor Awards dinner. “He was very, very, very moved by it,” Branch 116’s Gardiner said. “We were sitting at the table with him, and it was all he could do to basically maintain his composure. It was quite an honor. We’re a small union in that Hoosier Heartland Area, and it ... made us feel proud that we were recognized by the AFL-CIO.”

Osbourne said that Lauer was an easy choice. “What happened was, is when everybody realized how many times and how year after year Allen Lauer’s name came up, we were in a spot where we were like, ‘Wow, we could almost give this to Allen every year,’” he said. “He never stops achieving new things.”



Jean Lauer spoke in her husband’s honor at the 2026 banquet.

Though Lauer had been retired for years, he never missed a meeting, even immediately after surgery. Following his death last year, Osbourne said the board was moved to honor Lauer’s commitment to the labor movement further.

“The whole chapter and the executive board, the committee, everybody was like—it’s almost like at the same time we started talking about renaming the Lifetime Achievement Award to the Allen Lauer Lifetime Achievement Award,” Osbourne said. “And it went over very well at our annual meeting. It went over very well at our fundraiser, which is the labor dinner. And then his wife, she accepted on his behalf. And it was just the best moment of the last nine years, to be honest.”

The Allen Lauer Lifetime Achievement Award was officially given out for the first time at the February 2026 dinner to Leroy Jackson from Laborers Local 213. A plaque was also posthumously given for Lauer, which was accepted by his wife, Jean, and a standing ovation was given for Lauer.

Branch 116 Director of Retired Members **Rebecca Riley** remembers Lauer fondly as her mentor. “I was president for six years, and if I had not known Al, I probably wouldn’t have been that. But he was president when I first started, and a couple years in, he—I don’t know, he must have saw something in me that I did not,” she said.

She described him as a respectful and giving person. “He respected

people, and even though he was my mentor when I became president, we may not have always agreed, but he always, always respected the position, and he respected me. And, you know, we’re getting older, and new people come in, which should be happening, things change. And I know he didn’t always agree with the changes, but ... he respected what was going on in the branch. He was a good friend of mine for all these years.”

Because of Lauer’s efforts over the years, Branch 116 has also voted to name its union hall after Lauer.

Riley added that Lauer was always supporting other local labor organizations. “This is a pretty good community for people to support other unions within the city. Him and his wife, Jean, did so much,” she said. “He just gave his all for everybody and everything. ... He won awards that none of us ever even knew about.”

As a legislative liaison for many years, politics was a point of focus for Lauer. “All the local politicians knew him, and he could walk into any office and start a conversation,” Riley said, adding that they may not have always agreed, but they “respected him and he respected them.”

The AFL-CIO’s Osbourne said Lauer’s impact on the Indiana labor movement is massive. “The guy just never quit. He never gave up. He never stopped educating people and helping people understand not just the labor movement, but why we fight legislation, how it affected the Post Office, the letter carriers. It was unbelievable,” he said of the late carrier. “He was well known, well loved in this area for all he gives. I don’t think if I spent the rest of the day on the phone I could cover all of his accomplishments.” **PR**