

CCAs will look to members to explain

The Das arbitration award announced in January created a new opportunity for transitional employees by replacing the TE position with a new category of workers called city carrier assistants (CCAs). The Das award also created an opportunity for the NALC to boost its membership.

“The Postal Service is hiring tens of thousands of new CCAs, and this provides us a chance to strengthen our union—the kind of opportunity that is rare these days,” NALC President Fredric Rolando said. “We’ve gained new rights and a path to a full career for those who take the CCA jobs, and now we need to show them the benefits of NALC membership.”

The arbitration award boosted the career choices of CCAs compared to those available to employees whose positions were abolished. Like TEs, CCAs will be members of the NALC bargaining unit and will be appointed for 360-day terms. But unlike TEs, CCAs will earn a pre-career appointment version of seniority (called “relative standing”) that will give them preference for career job openings in their installations. All career carrier vacancies will be filled by converting CCAs to full-time regular status in order of their relative standing in the installation.

The Postal Service will hire about 32,000 CCAs in the immediate future, with half of those expected to come from the ranks of TEs. Since only about 70 percent of TEs were members of the union, that makes for a large pool of potential new members. Convincing them to join NALC would benefit both the union and the new members, Rolando said.

“We want to make sure that every person who carries the mail is an NALC member, because a union with a high organization rate in its craft is a strong union, and it serves all of its members better,” the president said. “But we

have to explain to these new carriers why they should join, and letter carriers at the branch level will play a critical role in organizing our new colleagues.”

So what do you tell a CCA about why he or she should join the union?

At the national rap session held in Las Vegas Feb. 9, NALC Director of City Delivery Lew Drass made a presentation about bringing CCAs into the union fold. He provided an impressive list of members-only benefits, but reminded attendees of the greater cause: The strength of a union comes from a group of people acting as one.

“I wanted everyone at the rap session to walk out knowing just how to talk to a CCA about joining,” Drass said. “Aside from the many benefits only union members enjoy, CCAs should join because it will boost our ability to represent them and to make their jobs better. The union can represent CCAs more vigorously when we speak with the authority that comes with a well organized union. As union members, CCAs would have a say in how they are represented. And working together gives us the power we need to prevail in struggles like saving Saturday delivery.”

In fact, the CCA job category wouldn’t even exist without the NALC’s long struggle—during the National Agreement negotiations and arbitration—to win access to benefits and a career path for transitional employees. And the struggle is not over—the union’s job now is to protect those newly won benefits, with the help of all of our members.

As NALC members, we have the right to participate in the union’s democratic process. NALC is one of the most democratic unions in the U.S. Members vote directly for local and national officers and on proposed contracts. The national convention, held every two years, is the supreme body of the union, where members elected to serve as delegates chart the course of the union and set NALC policy.

Today, NALC is composed of about 265,000 active and retired letter carriers



NALC has produced materials to help educate CCAs about the benefits of membership.

benefits of NALC membership

in more than 2,100 branches. From the national headquarters offices in Washington, DC, NALC keeps an eye on Congress and the USPS. Fifteen national business agents coordinate activities within their regions, and state associations promote grassroots legislative campaigns. Union members can speak out at branch meetings, vote in local and national union elections, run for office, and work for policies and programs they support.

Our unity is our strength, and with it, the NALC has achieved great things to improve our careers and our lives.

Since 1889, NALC has helped win every pay increase and improvement in benefits letter carriers have gained. Before 1970, the union had to persuade Congress to pass a law to raise letter carriers' pay. But with passage of the Postal Reorganization Act that year, NALC won carriers the right to bargain over wages, benefits and working conditions. Few other federal employees enjoy such collective bargaining rights. Since then, the average carrier's annual pay has grown from \$8,000 to \$54,589, rising higher than inflation.

NALC has also helped secure justice, dignity and better working conditions for letter carriers on the job. The Postal Service can be an impersonal and sometimes hostile bureaucracy. Yet because of the NALC, letter carriers have ways to fight unwarranted discipline, discrimination and other abuses.

On the local level, NALC stewards iron out day-to-day problems and keep an eye on safety and health conditions in the station and out on the routes. Stewards and branch officers provide strong representation every step of the way when you file a grievance—including third-party arbitration if necessary.

On the national level, a computerized arbitration index assists NALC representatives in raising and resolving workplace grievances. In addition, the union can take disputes with the Postal Service over the interpretation of the contract to arbitration. NALC has helped thousands of letter carriers

win reinstatements, back pay, unpaid overtime and seniority rights.

NALC members also enjoy many exclusive benefits, including:

- A free subscription to *The Postal Record*
- \$5,000 accidental death benefit and access to other Mutual Benefit Association products
- Scholarship opportunities for family members
- Access to the e-Activist Network and other communication tools

Then there's the long list of benefits that union members enjoy through the AFL-CIO's UnionPlus program, from discounts on vacations, legal services or cell phone service to deals on car and truck rental, moving services, health clubs and computers. UnionPlus also offers scholarships and good deals on home and car loans and on credit cards. (Go to unionplus.org for more information.)

CCAs who are new to the craft will attend an orientation, and that's the natural time to ask them to join the union. Former TEs who become CCAs can be approached at the station. Most NALC members join the union after a branch officer asks them at orientation. But you don't have to be an officer or steward to ask a CCA to join your branch. Many a carrier who was still on the fence has decided to join NALC after talking to the carrier at the next case or in the swing room.

President Rolando urged letter carriers to approach prospective members, even those who are dragging their feet, in a positive way. "Always have a welcoming attitude, and don't get mad at them if they haven't joined yet," he said. "Like they say, you catch more flies with honey than vinegar."

On the other hand, don't stop asking. Give prospective members a chance to get all the information they need and to sign up when they are ready.

"The one thing we can't have," Rolando said, "are people who haven't joined the union because they've never been asked." **PR**

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