

# What it is, what it was, what it shall be



Director of Education  
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**A**s we leave summer behind and head into fall, I thought it was a good time to provide an update on some recent NALC educational events and those coming up in the near future.

**National convention**—Thousands of delegates got up early most mornings and stayed late in the afternoons to attend the many educational workshops at the national convention held in Los Angeles. More than 40 separate classes were conducted

by national officers, headquarters staff and outside experts on a wide variety of topics of interest to union members. These included classes aimed at stewards, such as contract administration, city delivery and building better grievance files. Branch administrators could attend training for trustees and learn about the *NALC Constitution*, branch bylaws and elections, as well as attend various classes on how to manage branch finances, dues, membership and records. Of general interest were classes such as preparing for retirement, college planning for letter carriers and their children, postal reform, NALC history, safety and health, and suicide prevention. These are but a few of the many classes that were offered.

The turnout for these workshops was outstanding. Many classes were filled to capacity, causing some delegates to be turned away. Fortunately, most of these were able to attend a second offering later in the week, but some classes were moved to larger rooms to accommodate the overflow crowd. It was inspiring to see so many union brothers and sisters eager to obtain useful information they could use to build their branches and better the work lives of their fellow carriers.

**Leadership Academy**—Last year, we received a record number of 227 applications for Leadership Academy, and this year appears very close to equaling that number. The postmark deadline for applications was only a few days prior to my writing this article. Applications are still arriving, but so far 210-plus applications for the 2017 Academy have been received. It is especially encouraging to see that nearly half of these are first-time applicants, many of whom are current or former CCAs.

Once the applications are logged in and scanned, a copy is sent to the applicant's NBA, who will review it and provide feedback to help with the selection process. The applicant's branch president is also sent a letter asking for any information he/she might wish to contribute to the applicant's file. It usually takes about four to six weeks to get all of this information back and into the file. Each file is then reviewed by President Fredric Rolando, who makes the final selections. Once the selections are made, each of the applicants will receive a letter informing them of their status.

Around the time this issue of *The Postal Record* arrives at your home, the 31 members of Class 21 will be in the middle of their second week at the Academy. When they complete

their third week in early December, more than 625 students will have been through the Academy since the first class in 2005. With each graduating class, the impact of the Academy continues to grow as graduates assume leadership and supporting roles in their branches and state associations and at the national level. Presently, the Leadership Academy can claim 20 RAAs, seven Headquarters staff members, four regional workers' compensation assistants, two NBAs, and one resident national officer as graduates. Just as important, hundreds of graduates have gone on to serve the NALC in various other capacities, such as arbitration advocates, dispute resolution team members, OWCP representatives, shop stewards, and route adjustment team members, as well as food drive, MDA and community service coordinators, just to name a few.

**Advanced Formal A and Beyond**—NALC Vice President Lew Drass heads a team of instructors consisting of RAAs and Headquarters staff who conduct a week-long training for shop stewards called "Advanced Formal A and Beyond." This training is designed for those stewards who have some experience at Formal Step A but who wish to enhance and improve their skills at enforcing the National Agreement. The first class was held last winter at the Maritime Institute near Baltimore. Subsequent classes have been scheduled there for this fall and more are planned for the future.

**Branch officer training**—Early next year, another round of branch officer training will be conducted by NALC Secretary-Treasurer Nicole Rhine, Assistant Secretary-Treasurer Judy Willoughby and Headquarters staff. This program builds upon the secretary-treasurer workshops the NALC held for many years by adding specialized classes for branch and state association presidents/vice presidents, recording secretaries, financial secretaries and trustees.

These classes will cover such subjects as the *NALC Constitution* and bylaws—what they require and the process for amending them; how to audit branch financial records; what branch policies need to be in place; how to take good minutes; what notifications need to be sent to the membership; what to check before signing certain documents; how to handle Letter Carrier Political Fund and MDA funds; what to know before taking over your position; how to detect and prevent fraud; how to run a good meeting; creating branch transparency with regard to finances; and ethics for union officers.

While the dates and locations have not been finalized, they will be announced on the NALC website and in the *NALC Bulletin*. These classes fill up fast, so keep your eyes open.

**NALC Headquarters has in the planning stages several** other training opportunities for members, so keep a watch out for those, too. Additionally, NBAs, state associations and local branches regularly conduct training at rap sessions, conventions and other events. If you want to get involved, you only have to ask.