

Madison might, media malfeasance, magazine magic



Philip
Dine

Wisconsin’s “Enough is enough” rally, held a few weeks ago as I write this, did NALC proud—garnering coverage on more than a dozen major news outlets around the Badger State and sparking an enthusiastic public reaction.

The event, held in the state capital, Madison, featured presidents of out-of-town branches: Green Bay Branch 619’s Pat Van Egeren, Milwaukee Branch 2’s Rob Kosier, and Fond du Lac Branch 125’s Aaron Le Duc. That translated into coverage by various Madison outlets (*Wisconsin State Journal*, WORT community radio, network TV affiliates) and beyond, such as the state’s largest newspaper, the *Milwaukee Journal*, plus Milwaukee’s ABC and Fox stations, 80 miles to the east; and the ABC affiliate in Green Bay, 140 miles up north.

And because it coincided with the Wisconsin State Association of Letter Carriers fall seminar, the 110 letter carriers attending the seminar from around Wisconsin attended the rally at the capitol building. Other major Wisconsin unions, including the AFT and UAW, were there to lend support.

These elements were due in no small measure to tactical decisions made by WSALC President Dawn Ahnen, perhaps not coincidentally a Marine veteran who joined the military while still in high school. When necessary, reporters were kept in line by this 34-year carrier and past president of Beloit Branch 715, who also sits on the state AFL-CIO’s executive board. She and Rob carved out time to do a pre-rally interview with Milwaukee’s Spectrum News 1, further boosting media interest.

The blanket news coverage accomplished the mission of informing the public, as carriers quickly learned once back on their routes.

“We got tons of positive reinforcement from the community,” Dawn said. “My customers said they saw it on the news. A lot said they didn’t know that these crimes were happening, and that ‘We’re going to watch out for you guys, keep a light on and watch out for letter carriers more.’”

A *New Yorker* cartoon decades ago pictured a newsroom with a sign, “Danger, journalist doing math.” I’ll propose a new version to fit today’s media scene: “Danger, journalist doing fact-check.” Rather than fact-checking other media outlets or political debates, news organizations might first get their own houses in order, because few journalists possess either the requisite expertise or objectivity to play this role.

Case in point: Reuters recently fact-checked a story about

the Postal Service allegedly endorsing the Democratic presidential ticket (it hadn’t), but in so doing Reuters circulated the myth that USPS is taxpayer-funded.

In fairness, Reuters’ global enterprise editor along with its editor for ethics and standards engaged with us when we brought it to their attention, and then corrected the article to state that USPS earns its own revenue. However, the update put the clarification in the ninth paragraph, after repeating the initial error—which the editors said was Reuters’ policy.

I suggested to them that moving forward, Reuters might consider altering that practice by putting the correction up top, since not every reader will wade through the updated version to discover what’s new. We’ll keep you apprised.

OK, “magic” might be a bit hyperbolic, but alliteration carried the day (smile). In any case, NALC and *The Postal Record* continued their run of success in the International Labor Communications Association’s annual competition for labor journalists, the largest in North America. In the 2024 ILCA contest, NALC garnered four awards, including two first-place honors—one for a story on labor history, the other for earned media coverage of the very “Enough is enough” rallies cited above. A full report of the recognition accorded *The Postal Record* can be found on page 15.

While welcome, this is perhaps no surprise, given the dedication of this magazine’s staff. I spent a quarter-century in newsrooms in New England, the Midwest and right here in Washington, DC, working with some talented journalists. The communications folks who put out this magazine and contribute in other ways to telling NALC’s story are as committed and skilled as any I encountered in those newsrooms. And, as mission-focused. Example: Send a story with grammatical errors Jenessa’s way, and you’ll soon be racing for the hills as she flexes her ever-present red pens.

To all of you, from HQ officers to rank-and-file letter carriers, regional leaders to branch officers, please continue in the new year your outstanding work amplifying our union’s message. Your role is not only vital to NALC’s success in improving the lot of America’s letter carriers and ensuring the future of the Postal Service, it also serves as a communications model for the entire labor movement.

EDITORIAL STAFF:
Director of Communications and Media Relations Philip Dine
Managing Editor Mike Shea
Writer/Editor Rick Hodges
Writer/Editor Jenessa Wagner
Editorial Assistant Sarah Eccleston

The Postal Record (ISSN 0032-5376) is published monthly by the National Association of Letter Carriers. Periodicals postage paid at Washington, DC, and at additional mailing offices.

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to Membership Department, NALC, 100 Indiana Ave. NW, Washington, DC 20001-2144.

Subscription included in membership dues. First-class subscription available for \$20 per year (contact Membership Department).

© 2024 by the National Association of Letter Carriers.

Circulation: 287,000. Union-printed using soy-based inks.

CHANGE OF ADDRESS? Contact the Membership Department.

Follow us on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and YouTube by going to NALC.org.

