



**Happy New Year 2009!**

## 2009 Installation of Officers

*It's not too late to respond for the Installation Dinner  
to be held on Saturday January 24<sup>th</sup>!*

The dinner will be held at McKinley's Banquet Center on McKinley Parkway in Blasdell. National Business Agent Pete Coradi will be in attendance and will install all newly elected and returning officers. Historically, this party has been very well received! Members are admitted for free and guests are \$35.00. This includes: dinner, dancing and an open bar. Cocktails will be from 6 - 7pm with dinner following from 7 - 8pm. At 8pm we will install our officers, open the bar and dance until 11! Throughout the night, we will raffle door prizes and hold a 50/50 raffle to benefit COPA. If you have not sent your response in, please do so no later than January 17<sup>th</sup>. Hotel rooms will be available at the Clarion Hotel which is located within the banquet center; you may reserve a room by calling the hotel directly at 648-5700 and ask for the APWU discounted rate. If you have any questions or wish to reply by phone, please contact Michelle Kwoka at 716-434-8997 or Lori Ennis at 716-807-5633.

*This event is a benefit of membership and we encourage ALL members to attend!!*

## We Are ONLINE!

[www.apwuwny.com](http://www.apwuwny.com)

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Union AFL-CIO  
WNY Area Local #183**  
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Frank Cassasante - Alternate

## **From The President**

### **Timothy Northem**



Another holiday season has passed us by. This was perhaps one of the most enjoyable seasons I have had in times remembered. I am hoping you all shared in a seasons as enjoyable. As we move into the New Year, many of challenges we face are the same as those from years gone by. At the same time, this year is sure to bring us challenges we have never before faced, issues and changes that we are unfamiliar with and unsure of.

The state of and direction of our economy remain unsure, and could have profound impacts on all of us and our families. The mail volume is continuing its steady decline. And the impact on the carrier craft from the FSS machines is set to have a significant impact on the clerk craft. On top of this, local management continues to cut our staffing well below that necessary to run the units with anything resembling a viable business designed towards customer service. As a Union Leader, I wish it was really as easy to point out such glaring deficiencies, such as the 30 minute wait in line with two open window stations, or the fact that the mail does not get finalized in the box section till 12 noon because there are no clerks available, would open managements eyes and they would say, "Oh Yeah, we will fix that...and staff accordingly" Unfortunately, as I have seen over and over, management continues to try and force a square peg into a round hole. I would normally tell you that such basic principals should be part of Basic Supervising 101, however, such BASIC elements of supervision have been thrown aside as the "pool" of applicants has all but evaporated. The only known requirement for new applicants is to be able to do exactly what they are told, without question. Any degree in "Ask No Questions" or "Pass the Buck" is an automatic acceptance (not that I've seen anyone refused). The point is that we have little to work with but will continue to raise and push your issues forward. Although we have seen some positive changes in local management (only because the problems have moved elsewhere or are gone), what we will now have to deal with remains to be seen. I would like to remain optimistic, but find it difficult from past experiences. But, regardless, we shall not give up the struggle.

I have been preaching, as does every fellow Union Officer, that we are a family. A family of brothers and sisters who face and share the same difficulties and hardships created by the organization we work for. To be quite honest, the response from this local, from you, my fellow brothers and sisters, has been both pleasing and at times disheartening. Without a doubt, I have seen an increase in communication from the entire local. There has been an increase in the participation at our monthly meetings, our social events and more volunteers for our committees. Lori and I are getting more and more phone calls regarding issues in many of the offices we represent. I am even getting calls from MAL offices within our jurisdiction who express an interest in joining with our local. This is positive and encouraging to all of us. So, for the most part, I am pleased and extend my gratitude and sincere appreciation to all of you who are actively involved, at whatever level you are able to contribute. This includes meeting attendance, submission of articles for our paper, joining a committee, contributing to COPA, attending our social events or supporting our grievance process. Thank You. What troubles me, and is a constant struggle for all of us, are those employees who have chosen to not join with us, yet, benefit from the continuing struggles and efforts put forth by this Union, both Nationally and Locally.

(Continued on page 7)



## From The Vice President



Lori Ennis

New Year, new President, new hope! With our economy, our jobs and our entire country in a chasm so deep it seems we will never get out, I have hope that there will be clearing after the storm. I've never been one to hang in a deep depression for long or give up before the fight has been exhausting and the current conditions will not change that. Although I will admit I have lost more sleep over this job than I ever thought I would, I'm not ready to throw in the towel. And I hope that none of you are either. It's easy to lose faith in people, the Union, God or the future. Don't take the easy way out and Don't Give Up!

That is my message for this New Year; my only message. And in not giving up, you must communicate with us. I cannot tell you how many members have come forward this year and stood next to us to fight, put their name on an argument and took responsibility for protecting their job right alongside us. This is encouraging to me. We have added 3 new stewards to the Local. This gives me hope. We have spent countless hours fighting the obvious! But what is obvious to us, is skewed by a manager who is caught in a vise. They may want to do the right thing but each time they dare to agree with us, the vise tightens a little more. And everyone knows that you can only tighten it so much before whatever is inside of it breaks. That is what we often see in management – broken people.

I believe that the majority of managers set out into their careers with ambition, vision and ideals. Time wears on and control shifts out of their hands. Now these creatures that once had purpose and aspirations are broken and empty. And you can see it in their faces, in their actions and you can hear it in the words..."my hands are tied". And when I hear those words, I realize I am now and will always be on the right side; our side, the worker's side.

I will, along with all of you, have times when I feel I have no fight left. I will question myself and the Executive Board when there are difficult decisions to be made, and there will be. And sometimes I will still

cry because I feel helpless when my friends are exsessed to other installations. But I will find the fight when I need it, find strength to make tough decisions and wipe the tears before I move on to the next battle over unsubstantiated excessing.

All I ask this year is that you don't give up! Don't give up on me, the Union and most importantly yourself.

I know sometimes we lash out at the easiest target when a situation seems dire. And I can handle being that target from time to time because society has groomed us to feel better when we have someone to blame. But when the anger subsides and we realize that management is the realistic target, all I ask is that you come back over and stand next to me and don't give up.

That's it; my short and sweet message to my brother's and sister's. May this New Year find you happy, healthy and faithful!

As always, I remain yours in Union Solidarity

### Upcoming Membership Meetings

January 17, 2009

February 21, 2009

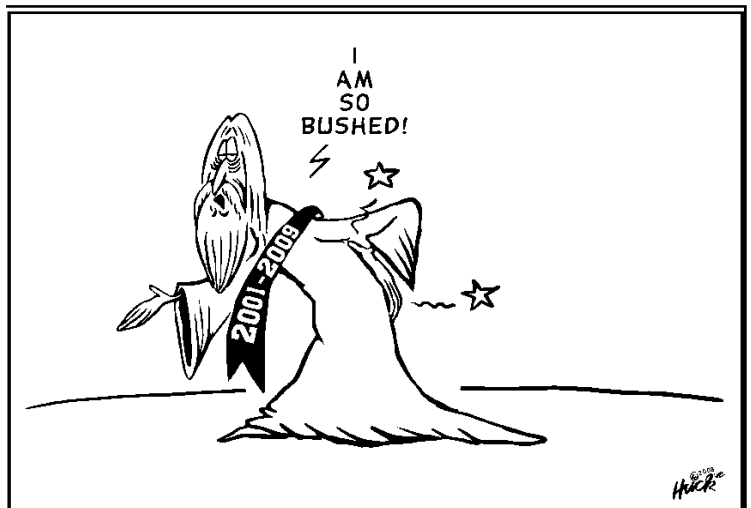
March 21, 2009

General Membership Meetings begin at 7pm

### Special Events

Installation Dinner –

January 24, 2009



**It All Adds Up****Declining Volume, Killing the Messenger, Excessive Discounts****Burrus Update #01-09, Jan. 7, 2009**

It has been widely reported that the Postal Service has been experiencing serious reductions in mail volume, with corresponding financial deficits. This decline in mail volume is directly related to the nation's economic crisis, and despite the promises of advocates of "postal reform," volume will not increase until the economy recovers.

More harm than good resulted from the Postal Accountability and Enhancement Act of 2006, which was promoted as a way to "save" the Postal Service, and unless Congress relieves the USPS of the onerous obligation to pre-fund its retiree healthcare liability, it is doubtful that the Postal Service as we know it can survive until the economy recovers and mail volume returns.

Postal management's response to the dismal situation has been in keeping with its historic knee-jerk reaction: Reduce work hours. Service has begun to suffer, and some members of Congress have begun to question whether the USPS is in compliance with its service standards.

**Misplaced Blame**

Recent exposés in the *Philadelphia Daily News* reveal acts of deception by postal managers that were intended to mask the delay of mail and perhaps even to cover up the destruction of mail.

The Postal Service response has been to "kill the messenger." Instead of maintaining a complement of employees sufficient to process, transport, and deliver the mail to the Philadelphia community, postal management contracted with a private, high-priced public relations firm that has sought to obscure the facts. And, after lengthy review and analysis, the Postal Service has documented postal employees sleeping in locker rooms during their lunch breaks. Give me a break!

The Philadelphia Area Local, led by President Gwen Ivey, has waged a spirited fight to inform the public that smoke and mirrors do not deliver mail; you need workers.

**Evidence**

Recent letters delivered to my residence offer clear evidence that the special relationship between the large mailers and postal management has reached a new level of absurdity. The law specifies that postal rates will be uniform for every letter within a weight band and class, regardless of its destination, and although the First-Class rate is 42 cents, many mailers pay significantly less.

That is because, beginning in 1976, postal management schemed to permit large mailers to circumvent the requirement of uniform rates. USPS executives reduced postage for major mailers under the guise that they were saving the Postal Service a significant amount of money by performing postal work such as pre-sorting their mail. This fiasco became known as *worksharing*, but it would be more appropriately titled *rate subsidization*. As a result of this practice, large mailers' rates in 2009 are at the same level that average Americans paid in 1995.

With the Postal Service bleeding red ink, management is searching for innovative ways to increase revenue and reduce costs. The solution is obvious:

Eliminate this "worksharing" charade and hold true to the legal standard of uniform rates.

The lame excuse that if major mailers were forced to pay appropriate rates they would reduce the amount of mail they send loses credibility in the face of the unprecedented reductions in mail volume — during a period when rates have been at historic lows. Fifty years of data show that rates increases at or below inflation do not determine volume. As the saying goes, "*It's the economy, stupid.*"

**For Your Review**

As you review the [envelopes below](#), see whether you can find differences that justify the different rates. All three envelopes include a nine-digit bar code, and each is machine-readable on postal equipment, which processes such envelopes for less than 1 cent per letter. During a period when postal employees are on standby and machinery sits idle, the Postal Service is reducing first-class postage and postal revenue by as much as 8 cents and 10 cents per letter, while they cry crocodile tears and bemoan the size of the deficit.

Compounding the lunacy of this worksharing sleight-of-hand, the discounts are allegedly based upon "avoided postal costs." So, if we negotiate a pay increase for APWU-represented employees and postal costs increase proportionally, the discounts are increased to reflect the avoided cost.

But the same principle does not seem to extend to circumstances when postal costs are reduced, such as the removal of 100 million work hours from postal costs in the last four years. This work-hour reduction has made the remaining employees much more productive, but the increased postal productivity was never factored into the formula used to set postage rates for big mailers: The cost savings were not transformed into smaller discounts. At a time when postal productivity has reached new highs, the so-called "avoided postal cost" as reflected in workshare discounts is the highest in history. It does not take a genius to realize that something is wrong with this picture.

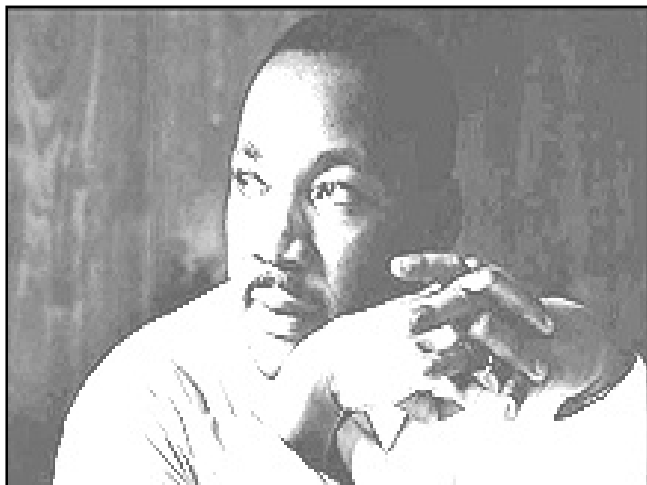
As postal managers explore ways to reduce costs and generate revenue, once again I suggest that they begin with the elimination of workshare discounts and retain a complement of employees sufficient to provide retail services, and to collect, process, and transport mail. For additional savings they could cancel the contract with the expensive public relations firm whose only job is to whitewash fraudulent activity in Philadelphia.

**William Burrus****President**





## Remembering Dr. King and his Dream....

January 19, 2009



"Our lives begin to end the day we become silent about things that matter"





**YOU CAN LEARN MORE**

**ABOUT THE ACCIDENT**

**BENEFIT PLAN**

**ON THE INTERNET:**

<http://www.apw-aba.org/>

F-19W(03-06)

## APWU Complaint About Falsified Reports Prompts OIG Audit of Philadelphia P&DC

APWU Web News Article #126-08, Dec. 23, 2008

An APWU complaint that senior managers and other supervisors filed false mail-count reports at the Philadelphia Processing & Distribution Center has resulted in an exposé in the *Philadelphia Daily News* that has highlighted chronic understaffing at the facility and the devastating effect it has had on service. Shortly after the newspaper began reporting on the controversy on Dec. 1, the Office of Inspector General announced it was conducting an audit of the facility, and the facility's top manager was replaced.

The union complaint, filed with the Postal Service's OIG on Oct. 24, alleged that high-ranking USPS officials had ordered clerks at the P&DC to drastically reduce the daily mail-count by millions of pieces each week. "We think they were doing that in order to justify staffing cutbacks and save on other expenses," said Gwen Ivey, APWU Philadelphia Area Local president.

The efforts to reduce staff — and the elimination of overtime — concerned union officials, who had received notice over the summer that 162 employees at the facility would be excessed in January. "We believe the fake numbers were to help hide the fact that the outsourcing of employees might hurt service," Ivey said.

In early December, the *Daily News* reported on the allegations that deliberate low-ball counts had been taking place for months, with tractor-trailers filled with unsorted mail being rerouted so that mail would go uncounted and that "daily color codes" were changed to make it appear that mail was not late.

When "calls, e-mails and messages poured in describing heartbreaking accounts of delayed and missing mail — and of postal workers upset they couldn't deliver the mail on time," the newspaper published follow-up stories that backed up the union accounts of mismanagement.

The *Daily News* stories told readers that the phony records and a ban on overtime seemed to have resulted in a "chronically understaffed plant unable to process unsorted mail, which sat in overflowing bins for days and weeks."

Postal inspectors began auditing the facility on Dec. 6 and are expected to take as long as two months before submitting a report.

**\*The full story on the mess in Philly was printed in the Philadelphia Daily News on December 5, 2008**



February 16, 2009



## **WHY DOES AMERICA NEED THE EMPLOYEE FREE CHOICE ACT?**

### **More than ever, working people today need a way to get ahead.**

- America's working people are stretched as never before. Wages are dropping, health care costs are rising and pensions are disappearing. For the first time in generations, people are very worried that their children will be worse off than they are.

### **Unions are the best route to the middle class.**

- Union members make 30 percent more than workers who don't have a union. That's about \$200 a week, or \$10,000 a year!
- Union members are 50 percent more likely to have employer-provided health insurance, and the benefits and costs are better. And 67 percent of union members are covered by defined-benefit pension plans through their jobs, compared with only 15 percent of workers who don't have unions.
- And communities with strong unions have higher living standards for everybody.

### **Sixty million people who don't have unions say they'd join one tomorrow, but too few will ever get the chance in our corporate-dominated system.**

- Companies routinely intimidate, harass, coerce and even fire people who try to form unions—and current labor law is helpless to stop them. The penalties are so slight for breaking the law that corporations simply consider it the cost of doing business. The government found that companies violated the rights of 26,824 workers in 2006 alone (and those are just the documented cases). A quarter even illegally fire workers.
- Even when workers win their unions, many companies delay bargaining any way they can. According to a new study by MIT, 44 percent of workers who form a new union never reach a first contract.

### **The Employee Free Choice Act is the change we need.**

- The Employee Free Choice Act would put the choice of whether to form a union back in workers' hands by giving them the option of using majority sign-up, an alternative to the current company-dominated system. Large national companies with good profit margins and good labor relations, such as AT&T and Kaiser Permanente, have used majority sign-up successfully for years.
- The Employee Free Choice Act guarantees that companies can't just drag their feet on a first contract. To guarantee workers can win a union contract, it provides for mediation or binding arbitration when it's needed.
- The Employee Free Choice Act levels the playing field by putting real penalties on companies that violate the law during organizing and contract campaigns.

## **President's Report** ( continued from page 2)

They currently hold one of the most secure jobs in the country, some of the best benefits and extremely competitive wages but refuse to join and thereby contribute to the continuing efforts. You can help us make a difference with these employees. Those offices who have not achieved 100% membership along with the names of the 40 non-members we have in this local are listed on our web site. Please talk to these employees, ask them to join with us. Please put any non-member in touch with Lori or I, we will gladly pay a visit to your office or meet after hours at yours and their convenience.

In closing, I would like to address the issue of higher level work. It appears, all too often, that our members are not being compensated for higher level work. Our Local Agreement requires employees be compensated for higher level work when higher level work is performed. Some of the tasks and duties that should be paid at the higher level rate include, but are not limited to, the following: Close-out duties (window), bulk mail acceptance and/or paperwork, vehicle maintenance (such as wipers, turn signals, checking tire pressures, washing, jump seats), training, or acting as a review clerk (no postmaster in facility). If you feel you are entitled to receive a higher level pay, you can either ask your postmaster to pay as such or contact us for assistance.

I am looking forward to seeing many of you at the Installation Dinner on Saturday January 24<sup>th</sup>. If you have not yet sent in your response, please do so, this occasion is a great social event and time to connect with other members in the Local. Also, don't forget to put in your closed.bid for the laptop computer. Details about the bidding for the laptop are listed to the right.

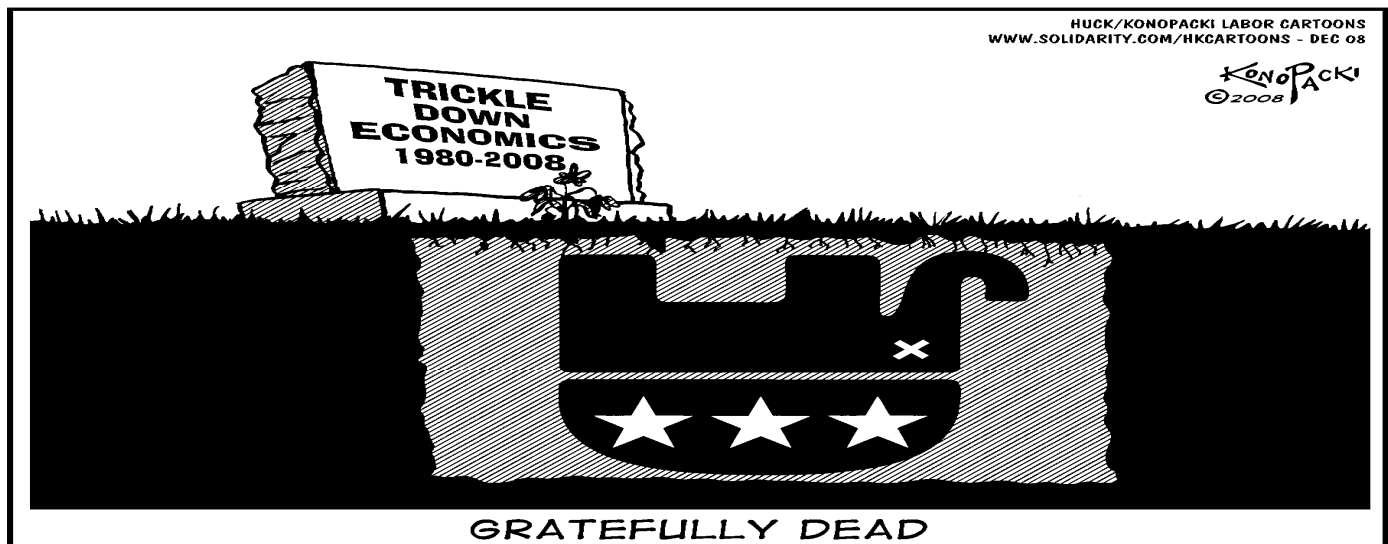
## **Closed Bidding For Laptop**

Due to the purchase of new equipment within the Local, we have a laptop computer that is no longer being used by any Local Officer. We will be holding a closed bid auction open only to members. Bids can be either mailed to the WNY Area Local at 115 S Main Street, Delevan, NY 14042 or turned in at the February Membership Meeting, February 21, 2009. All bids must be received in a sealed envelope marked clearly Laptop Bid. No bids will be opened prior to bids closing at 7:30pm during the meeting. The successful bidder will be announced at 8pm. The Laptop will be available for viewing at the January Membership Meeting. It will be auctioned as is and will be a final sale. The following is a description of equipment and features:

DELL Inspiron 1100,  
2GH CPU,  
28 GB Hard Drive,  
CD – RW Drive,  
2.4 GH Wireless G Notebook Adapter,  
Microsoft Windows XP Home Edition,  
Microsoft Office 2003,  
Acrobat Reader 5.0,  
External DVD player

\*also Includes wireless keyboard and mouse, several keys on keypad are inoperable but can be repaired.

Any questions, please contact Tim Northem at (716) 462-7221



Karla Farmer - Gowanda

Barb Edgar - Akron

Larry Roll - Arcade

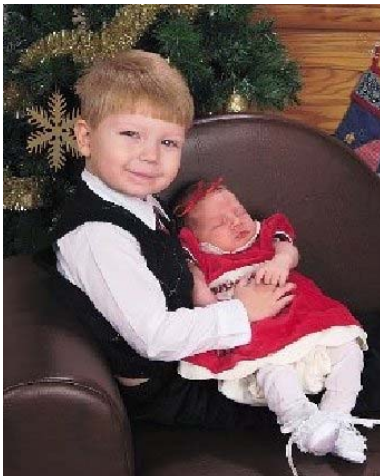


Get Well Soon  
Cheryl Wilson  
from our Angola office.  
She is out recovering  
from knee surgery.

## Congratulations On Your Retirement!!!

Tom Jurek - Hamburg  
Paula Walsh - Lancaster

## Welcome Caia Charlotte Cummings



Caia with proud big brother Kian

Congratulations to East Aurora  
Steward Sue Pieczynski  
and her husband Don  
on the birth of their  
granddaughter  
Caia Charlotte  
Born November 17, 2008  
weighing in at 8lbs  
Proud parents are Corinne and  
Kevin Cummings and  
Big brother Kian

If your baby is "beautiful and perfect, never cries or  
fusses, sleeps on schedule and burps on demand, an  
angel all the time," you're the grandma."

-- Theresa Bloomingdale

## What Do You Think?

What would you like to  
see in the next issue?  
What is going on in your  
office...retirements,  
marriages, new baby,  
off to college,  
sympathies...please let us  
know so we can keep  
everyone informed!! All  
correspondence can be  
e-mailed to:  
[lennisapwu@yahoo.com](mailto:lennisapwu@yahoo.com) or  
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We look forward to  
hearing from you!!

**ADAM  
APWU**

