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WMAL VOICE



OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF THE WESTERN MICHIGAN AREA LOCAL,
AMERICAN POSTAL WORKERS UNION, AFL-CIO



WMAL Voice

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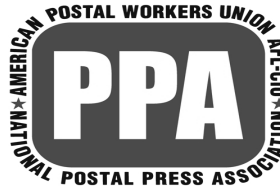
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OFFICE OF PERSONNEL MANAGEMENT 888-767-6738
retirement line

HR SHARED SERVICES CENTER 877-477-3273
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Editorial Policy: Submissions are welcome from all APWU members, sent to the address or email listed above. In accordance with the local constitution, the editor reserves the right to determine if material submitted to this publication shall be printed, and reserves the right to edit as needed for space and clarity. The views and opinions expressed within are those of the individual authors and do not necessarily reflect the official policy or position of the editor, local officers, or the APWU. All material must be signed, though names may be withheld upon request. The WMAL Voice is published bimonthly.

As of March 2005, a policy was instated to publish member condolences, births, marriages, and anniversaries. Please let me know at wmalvoice@gmail.com of anything you would like included. Pictures are welcomed!

The Long And Short Of It

By Mike Long, Vice President

Brothers and Sisters, for those who don't know me I wanted to take this opportunity to introduce myself. My name is Michael Long. I have recently been reappointed/relected to the position of Executive Vice-President of the Local. I held this position previously about seven or so years ago and is nice to be able to return and assist the union in its primary duty of representing the membership. Besides this position, my Postal job is a Maintenance Electronic Technician at the P-Campus in Grand Rapids. I am also the Executive Secretary of the Michigan Postal Workers Union. If I can be of any help, please let me know.

Maintenance – Working Up MUST stop!

If you are in maintenance, whatever position you hold, whether it is a Level 4 Custodian, Level 7 Maintenance Mechanic, Level 9 Mail Processing Equipment Mechanic, or such, your level is your level. If you want to work higher, then get on the Promotion Eligibility Register (PER) and get a higher-level job. If not, STOP working higher. The only person you are hurting is yourself, if in the future, you want a higher-level job. I have already had multiple meetings with Labor on this, and they say the same thing - you are not supposed to be working higher level. I know what you are going to say – “If I don't then it won't get done.” Fine, then it won't get done. Remember, we only work here. We don't assign the work to be done to ourselves. Management assigns the work to be done. They own the machines and they are the ones that are responsible for them. Article 3 in the National Agreement, as management always points out, gives them the right to: “A. to direct employees of the Employer in the performance of official duties...C. to maintain the efficiency of the operations entrusted to it; D. to determine the methods, means, and personnel by which such operations are to be conducted.” They decide who is going to do what work on what machine. Don't do their job! And don't allow them to continue allowing them to get by because they know you will do it. If we are going to be successful in getting higher level positions or having management staff properly/ correctly, then we need to make sure you are doing only your correct level (or down (e.g. 10s can do 9 and 7 work, 9s can do 7 work. However, 7s can NOT do custodial work. That is a different occupational code). Now, as a caveat on this, if management tells you to do higher level work, the rule that arbitrators have said is that you must follow the instructions given and grieve it. If management tells you to do higher level work, do it and then grieve it. Just don't do it and hope that it will be caught or someone else will grieve it. You need to step up and tell management that you need to see your steward and file a grievance to get paid the higher-level and to provide documentation in our struggle for this blatant violation of the contract to stop.

Management – the new Horseshack of the 2020's

With YouTube, old television shows have made a resurgence and people that grew up in the 70s and 80s and 90s can now make a reference to a program from that era and people from the 2000s and later may actually know what you are talking about. One said show is Mr. Kotter that aired back in the 80s. The show was based on kids that had learning difficulties in High School and a

teacher (Mr. Kotter) that would try to teach and learn from them as well. Besides being the start of John Travolta's career, one character in this show that stood out was Horseshack and the “OhOhOh” saying he made when he was trying to get someone's attention or knew the answer. That saying has now resounded as of late with the new batch of management. When I first started at the Postal Service, there

was a requirement, whether it was in writing or just a practice that you couldn't be in management, either as a 204B or anything, unless you have been on the floor and worked there in excess of six months. This is no longer the case. In so much, that management is now being hired directly off the street in some positions (and I have seen 204Bs being appointed with maybe one to two days of work experience). What that means is the new supervisors (whether acting or full-fledged), most don't have any background as to how the mail moves, how the machines operate, or how things are done. They are only being told to do this or that and they just do it, even if it is wrong; or they just make stuff up and when it doesn't work, blame it on the employees in the area. Why I referenced the TV show is this: when management is looking for people to be 204Bs, it seems like the new ones stepping up are doing the Oh Oh Oh, me, me, me to become one. As someone who has thirty-plus years in the Postal Service and travels to other locations, I can tell you that this isn't just here in Michigan but endemic everywhere. I can also tell you that the reasoning behind this is that those that do have the experience and have been here for a while know they don't usually want to become management in the first place.

By the time this article comes out, summer and Prime Time will probably be behind us and we can look forward to Fall and winter around the corner. Keep pushing forward and keep looking out for each other. As a union, we are stronger together and only together can we continue to succeed.



Yours in Solidarity,

Michael Long

By Jennifer Rizzon,

I am looking forward to attending the APWU Health Plan 38th Annual Open Season Seminar at the end of this month. There is some information for 2024 on the APWU Health Plan Website. Open enrollment is scheduled for Nov 13, 2023 through December 11, 2023. And hopefully, we will be able to schedule a Health Benefit Fair prior to the opening season.



There are two APWU plans to choose from, High Option and Consumer Driven Option. You can compare the two plans on the APWU Health Plan website. Premiums are self only, self plus one, and self plus family.

There is a dental insurance plan; and an APWU Health Plan & Medicare.

You can view plans and premiums on the APWU Health Plan website. And see if your doctors are in the network, or search for a new doctor in which specialty you need. But make sure you search under the plan you are signing up for.

There are instructions for how to enroll after you decide which plan is the best for you. And the instructions are based on your employment status.

Postal Service Employees

 Bargaining Unit Employee

 Outside Bargaining Unit

Postal Support Employee (PSE)

 PSE's can enroll during the open season after completion of their 360-day initial appointment. OR enroll within 60 days of completing your 360-day initial appointment.

Retirees

Continuation of coverage for postal & federal employees.

A low deductible plan – if you use a lot of health care services. The monthly premiums are more but your deductible will be less.

A Balanced Plan – save on monthly premiums while keeping your out-of-pocket costs lower.

High Deductible Plan – if you do not need a lot of health care services. Your monthly premiums will be less, and your deductible will be more.

If anyone has any questions for me to take to the Open Season Seminar, please send your questions to my personal e-mailing address. Goldengirl0624@gmail.com.

Watch for additional information to be posted on our local Facebook page.

WMAL Retiree Chapter Update

By Ray Novakowski, President

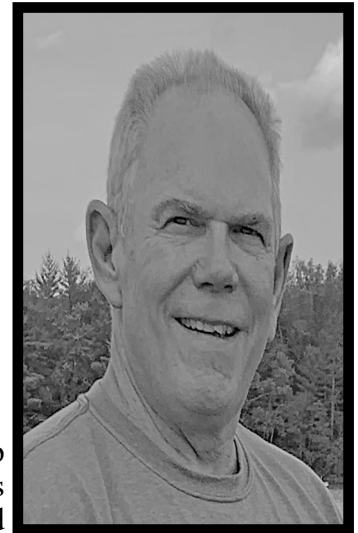
Welcome everyone. I hope you are all doing well. Summer is over and we are heading into Fall and Winter, be careful out there and stay warm.

Deb Ohanesian has volunteered to be the Vice President of the Chapter and we want to thank her for stepping up. All the positions are filled for the chapter, and I want to thank everyone for filling these position and for all the support.

We have also updated our Constitution/By-Laws and are meeting on a regular basis. Our next meeting will be November 14,2023 at 11am at the Union Hall. We would like to see you at our meetings, we share our stories from days past and discuss issues that are currently on the table. We have been discussing the changes to the health plans and how it will affect the retirees, I share updates from National on retiree issues and legislative issues, and we have a few snacks.

Coming up, in future meetings, we will continue discussion on the health plan, State and National Conventions plans and summer events.

As you think about retirement, don't forget to sign up for the retiree chapter, dues are a mere \$3 per month and can be deducted from your retirement check. And if you are retired and want to join the chapter, contact me at 616-560-7747 or raynova@sbcglobal.net



Yours in union solidarity,

Raymond Novakowski, President
WMAL Retiree Chapter

PRENATAL CARE

If you are pregnant or planning to get pregnant, than this is a very exciting time in your life. This is the time to start planning to make sure your baby's life starts off as healthy as possible. And one of the best ways to do that is through prenatal visits with your doctor.

What happens during prenatal visits?

During the first prenatal visit, you can expect your doctor to:

- Ask about your health history including diseases, operations, or prior pregnancies
- Ask about your family's health history
- Do a complete physical exam, including a pelvic exam and Pap test
- Take your blood and urine for lab work
- Check your blood pressure, height, and weight
- Calculate your due date
- Answer your questions

At the first visit, you should ask questions and discuss any issues related to your pregnancy. Find out all you can about how to stay healthy.

HOW CAN THE APWU HEALTH PLAN HELP?

You'll be happy to hear that both our plans - the High Option and the Consumer Driven Option - offer 100% coverage for in-network maternity care including prenatal care! So you can rest assured that you and your baby will be covered throughout your entire pregnancy.

And for those with the Consumer Driven Option Plan, we offer an online program called Maven for mothers-to-be that offer support through every stage of pregnancy and delivery. Visit www.myuhc.com or call 800-718-1299 for more information!



Later prenatal visits will probably be shorter. Your doctor will check on your health and make sure the baby is growing as expected. Most prenatal visits will include:

- Checking your blood pressure
- Measuring your weight gain
- Measuring your abdomen to check your baby's growth (once you begin to show)
- Checking the baby's heart rate

While you're pregnant, you also will have some routine tests. Some tests are suggested for all women, such as blood work to check for anemia, your blood type, HIV, and other factors. Other tests might be offered based on your age, personal or family health history, your ethnic background, or the results of routine tests you have had. Visit the pregnancy section of our website (womenshealth.gov) for more details on prenatal care and tests.

Source: <https://www.womenshealth.gov/a-z-topics/prenatal-care>



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ANTIBIOTIC USAGE

Antibiotics aren't always the answer

Antibiotics save lives. Improving the way healthcare professionals prescribe antibiotics—and the way we take antibiotics—helps keep us healthy now, helps fight antibiotic resistance, and ensures that these life-saving drugs will be available for future generations.

When antibiotics aren't needed, they won't help, and the side effects could hurt you

Common side effects of antibiotics include rash, dizziness, nausea, diarrhea, or yeast infections. More serious side effects include an infection that causes diarrhea, which can lead to severe colon damage and death. People can also have life-threatening allergic reactions.

- Antibiotics do not work on viruses
- Antibiotics are only needed for treating certain infections caused by bacteria
- Taking antibiotics creates resistant bacteria

More than 2.8 million antibiotic-resistant infections occur in the United States each year, and more than 35,000 people die as a result.

If you or your child needs antibiotics, take them exactly as prescribed. Talk with your doctor if you have any questions or develop any side effects.

Questions to ask your child's healthcare professional

1. What is the best treatment for my child's illness?

Your child can feel better without an antibiotic. Respiratory viruses usually go away in a week or two without treatment. Ask your healthcare professional about the best way

to feel better while your child's body fights off the virus.

2. What do I need to know about the antibiotics you're prescribing for my child today?

The antibiotic prescribed should be the one most targeted to treat the infection, while causing the least side effects.

3. What can I do to help my child feel better?

Pain relievers, fever reducers, saline nasal spray or drops, warm compresses, liquids, and rest may be the best ways to help your child feel better. Your healthcare professional can tell you how to help relieve your child's symptoms.

Adapted from *Antibiotics Aren't Always the Answer*, by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. To learn more about antibiotic prescribing and use, visit cdc.gov/antibiotic-use.

Common Condition	Common Cause	Common Cause	Common Cause	Are Antibiotics Needed?
	Bacteria	Bacteria or Virus	Virus	
Strep throat	✓			Yes
Whooping cough	✓			Yes
Urinary tract infection	✓			Yes
Sinus infection		✓		Maybe
Middle ear infection		✓		Maybe
Bronchitis / chest cold*		✓		No*
Common cold / runny nose			✓	No
Sore throat (except strep)			✓	No
Flu			✓	No

* Studies show that in otherwise healthy children and adults, antibiotics for bronchitis won't help you feel better.



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CERVICAL CANCER

Cancer is a disease in which cells in the body grow out of control. Cancer is always named for the part of the body where it starts, even if it spreads to other body parts later. When cancer starts in the cervix, it is called **cervical cancer**. The cervix connects the vagina (birth canal) to the upper part of the uterus. The uterus (or womb) is where a baby grows during pregnancy.

WHAT ARE THE RISK FACTORS FOR CERVICAL CANCER?

Almost all cervical cancers are caused by human papillomavirus (HPV), a common virus that can be passed from one person to another during sex. There are many types of HPV. Some HPV types can cause changes on your cervix that can lead to cervical cancer over time, while other types can cause genital or skin warts.

HPV is so common that most people get it at some time in their lives. HPV usually causes no symptoms so you can't tell that you have it. For most people, HPV will go away on its own; however, if it does not, there is a chance that over time it may cause cervical cancer.

HOW CAN THE APWU HEALTH PLAN HELP?

Whether you're enrolled in the High Option Plan or the Consumer Driven Option Plan, as long as you stay in-network, all preventive care is covered at 100% including:

Cancer screenings approved by the U.S. Preventative Services Task Force

Preventive care such as Pap smears and annual counseling for sexually transmitted infections

Routine mammograms – as follows:

- From age 35 through 39, one during this 5-year period
- From age 40, one every calendar year

HUMAN PAPILLOMAVIRUS (HPV) VACCINE

The HPV vaccine protects against the types of HPV that most often cause cervical, vaginal, and vulvar cancers.

- HPV vaccination is recommended for pre-teens aged 11 to 12 years, but can be given starting at age 9.
- HPV vaccine is also recommended for everyone through age 26 years, if they are not vaccinated already.
- HPV vaccination is not recommended for everyone older than age 26 years. However, some adults age 27 through 45 years who are not already vaccinated may decide to get the HPV vaccine after speaking with their doctor about their risk for new HPV infections and the possible benefits of vaccination. HPV vaccination in this age range provides less benefit, as more people have already been exposed to HPV.

HPV vaccination prevents new HPV infections, but does not treat existing infections or diseases. This is why the HPV vaccine works best when given before any exposure to HPV. You should get screened for cervical cancer regularly, even if you received an HPV vaccine.

*So don't hesitate and do your part to help detect cancer before it's too late.
Get screened today!*



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CERVICAL CANCER

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So don't hesitate and do your part to help detect cancer before it's too late. Get screened today!



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VETERAN'S CRISIS LINE

If a veteran or service member you know is showing signs of crisis, such as hopelessness, anxiety, or withdrawal, call on the caring professionals at the VA's Veterans Crisis Line who are ready to listen and provide support.

The Veterans Crisis Line is a free, confidential resource. Veterans, service members, and their families can access the line anytime.

There are three ways to take advantage of this benefit:

- Call 1-800-273-8255 and choose option one
- Go to VeteransCrisisLine.net/Chat
- Text 838255

Each option has free, confidential support 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year.

You can start a conversation today! Visit VeteransCrisisLine.net to download free Veterans Crisis Line materials so you can tell others how to do it, too.



Happy Retirement!!!!

(Congratulations & enjoy your next chapter in life!)

condolences to:



Deepest Sympathies to member Irene Erickson on the passing of her husband.

*Cover photo courtesy of Pexels.com (Y. Koppens)
Photo on page 10 courtesy of Pexels.com (J. Wellington)*

Welcome To Our New Members!!

Looking for a location to hold an event? Check out our Union Hall! Great rates for members!

Union Hall Rentals
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MI 49509
616-822-3520 | Capacity 188

	<u>Hall Rental</u>	<u>Security Deposit</u>	<u>Security Agent Fee</u>
Members:	\$250.00	\$200.00	\$0
Non-Profit (meetings only)	\$125.00	\$0	\$0
Public	\$650.00	\$300.00	\$100.00

Western Michigan Area Local
American Postal Workers Union
PO Box 2706
Grand Rapids, MI 49501-2706



Address Service Requested

Looking for answers? Make sure to check out:

www.wmal.org

****meeting minutes***

****steward contact information***

Next Union Meeting:

January 2024

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
	<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>5</i>	<i>6</i>
<i>7</i>	<i>8</i>	<i>9</i>	<i>10</i>	<i>11</i>	<i>12</i>	<i>13</i>
<i>14</i>	<i>15</i>	<i>16</i>	<i>17</i>	<i>18</i>	<i>19</i>	<i>20</i>
<i>21</i>	<i>22</i>	<i>23</i>	<i>24</i>	<i>25</i>	<i>26</i>	<i>27</i>
<i>28</i>	<i>29</i>	<i>30</i>	<i>31</i>			