



Tampa Letter Carrier

Volume 2 - Issue 11

A.R. "Tony" Huerta - NALC Branch 599

November 2003

**HAPPY
HANKSGIVING!**

**BRANCH
MEETING
THURSDAY
NOVEMBER 6
7:30 PM
AT
THE
UNION HALL**

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

ATTS LINE	5
UTSIDE THE LINES ...	6
EAT GOES ON.....	8
HERE DO YOU STAND.	9
ERSPECTIVE	9

President's Report

by **Jim Good**

President - Branch 599

As every active member of this branch knows these past few months have been filled with turmoil, accusations and strife from within. These conditions have tested the very backbone of this great branch, and I know that we will prove ourselves to be strong enough to come through this period and emerge a stronger, more cohesive branch as a result.

During the branch meeting on October 2nd, a motion was made and passed to support our past President Lenny Perez regarding his federal indictment, and to post a notice of our support on all union bulletin boards in the stations throughout the area represented by Branch 599.

There were over 225 members present at that meeting, the largest turnout outside of an election meeting that I can recall. The membership voted overwhelmingly in favor of that motion, and the notices should be posted at the stations by the time you read this article. Hopefully this will end the controversy surrounding this issue and where our branch stands regarding our support for Lenny.

At that same meeting a long list of Formal Charges, written against your president and signed by twenty-three members, was read. Our Executive Vice-President John Watts appointed a committee of three disinterested members, as mandated by Article X, Section 3 of the National Constitution and Article IX, Section 3 of the Branch Bylaws, to take testimony, hear the accused, report the

facts elicited and the verdict thereon to the membership at the next branch meeting. I have the utmost confidence in you, the members, as well as the National Constitution and the Branch By-laws as they relate to these charges

and look forward to the results of this investigation so that we can put this behind us and get on with the business at hand: helping you, the members, in your daily trials and tribulations of dealing with management and delivering the mail. I invite all of you to attend this next branch meeting on November 6th, so that we can start anew to strengthen and unite to face the many obstacles that we must face as a result of the President's Commission's report and the likelihood of postal reform.

Speaking of postal reform, our national office has set up a new way in which all union members can stay informed on any upcoming issues, as well as be alerted by e-mail when they are needed to help in letter writing or phone calling efforts to their congressional representatives. All you need to do is go to www.nalc.org and sign up as an E-Activist. The Postal Service will soon be involved in the most comprehensive postal reform effort since 1970, and we as union members need to be ready and waiting, when we are called upon, to let our elected representatives know what our positions are



(continued on page 4)

Branch Officers

PRESIDENT	Jim Good	813-960-3759 Cell 417-8877
EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT	John Watts	813-971-5525 Cell 240-5995
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FINANCIAL SECRETARY	John Gebo	813-985-5474
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TRUSTEE (Chairman)	Henry Dupree	813-621-6471
TRUSTEE	Butch Smith	813-933-4676
TRUSTEE	Brian Obst	727-507-0135
SERGEANT-AT-ARMS	Lance Jones	813-968-9369
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The National Association of Letter Carriers Branch 599, 3003 W. Cypress Street, Tampa, FL 33609-1617, publishes The Tampa Letter Carrier monthly. The opinions expressed in this publication are those of the writers, and do not necessarily reflect the opinions of Branch 599. It is the policy of this publication that all articles submitted for publication must be signed by the writer. All articles are subject to editing and revision at the discretion of the publisher & editor. **Please submit articles to the branch office no later than the tenth of the month.**

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NALC BRANCH 599 WEB SITE:

<http://www.nalc599.com>

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Forest Hills Annex	33613	Ella Winner	352-583-0626
Hilldale	33614	Gilbert Cabanas	813-855-0516
Hilldale Annex	33634	Lance Jones	813-968-9369
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Interbay	33629	Brian Obst	727-507-0135
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Northdale	33624	Freddie Nimphius	813-968-7491
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Plant City	33565	Misty Bauer	813-719-6793
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TCA	33607	Anthony Moran	813-872-0709
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Town & Country	33615	Brian Obst	727-507-0135
Ybor	33605	Detlev Aeppel	813-907-9685

Labor Management Members

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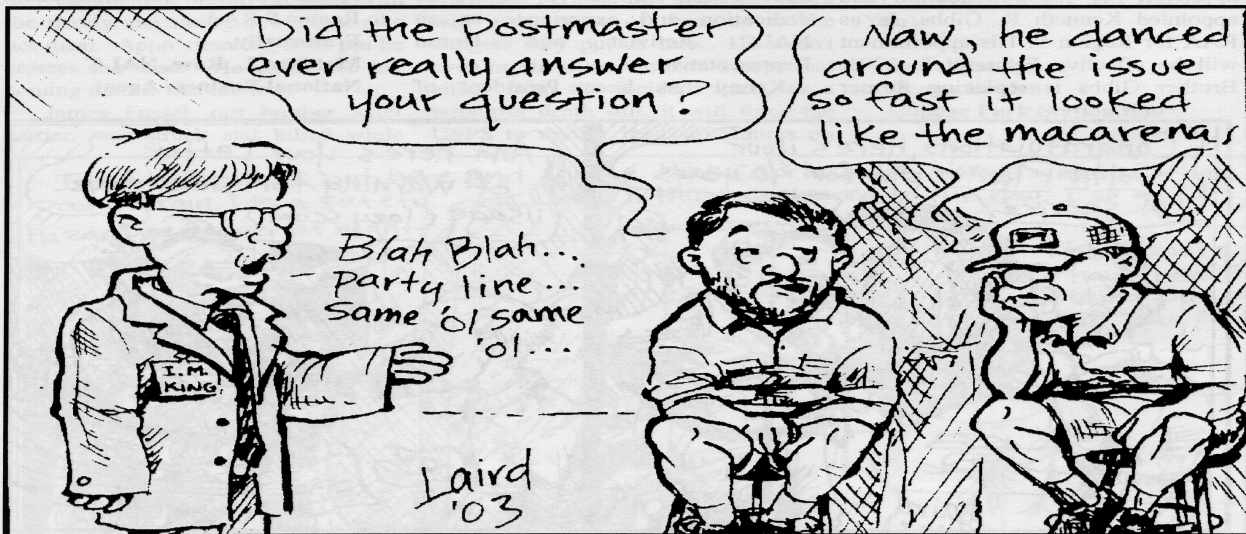
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at
The Coffee Cup
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in Drew Park
(NE corner of MLK & Hubert)



-----from The Orlando Carrier

The President's Report *(from page 1)*

and to educate them regarding our needs and concerns.

Another way that you can help is by contributing to COLCPE (Committee on Letter Carrier Political Education). This has just been made much easier, as a result of years of planning and hard work on the part of our National President Emeritus Vince Sombrotto and his staff. You can now, through Postal Ease, sign up to have payroll deductions go directly to COLCPE to help those people friendly to the NALC get the support they need to get elected. (See the back inside cover of the October Postal Record)

Branch 599 Health Benefits' Representative Detlev Aeppel and I just returned from the National Association of Letter Carriers' Health Benefit Seminar. It was the first seminar held in the past few years and it was very informative indeed. It turns out that 31.27 % of the membership of Branch 599 belongs

to the NALC Health Plan, well above the average for branches our size! The Plan's fees for 2004 have increased only 0.9% (to \$42.75 bi-weekly) for family coverage and only 3.7% (to \$29.76 bi-weekly) for active self only. So take a close look at our health plan during the upcoming open season (November 10th through December 8th) and see if it doesn't fit you and your family's needs. *(Please read Brother Aeppel's Health Benefit Report elsewhere in this newsletter)*

In closing, I want to reiterate the fact that I am always available to talk, explain and answer any and all questions you may have relating to the functions of your branch and the actions of myself or any of your elected officers. This is your branch, and there is no such thing as a closed door policy, or secrecy regarding the operations of my office. Everything is done with honesty and integrity, and I will strive to see that all of your elected officials follow that code of ethics.

ARSLAN UNIFORMS

Bill Moran

Retired Letter Carrier Branch 1477 St. Petersburg

Honorary Member Branch 599 Tampa

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The Watts Line

by **John A. Watts**

Executive Vice-President - Branch 599

The adjustment process is completed in Tampa except Produce Station, which will be adding an auxiliary route, hopefully. The problems the carriers in Tampa are going to have will have started October 27th when it gets dark at 6:00PM. This will become a major safety issue unless management rolls back the starting times and gets vehicles for all these PTF'S that have been transferred in.

The Postal Service has developed a new bonus system for management. Its called National Performance Assessment. This new bonus system is a grading system that will allow a manager or supervisor to receive up to 12% bonus depending on how they are graded. The kicker is they will be competing against their counterparts around the country.

This is the new pay for performance system that was recommended by the Committee on Postal Reform. Their bonuses will be based on the National goals of CXFC, PETE (Priority end to end) and achieving financial goals. Local goals will include the 5:00 PM Window, CSMX (Customer Service Satisfaction), VOE (Voice of the Employee), and of course, Financial (the budget). From what I have been told, the budget is tighter than it has ever been.

The bonus will also be based on DOIS. This means that the supervisor will be held accountable for what DOIS states your leaving time is and what your return time is. Your projected office and street time verses your actually office and street time.



On a bright note I feel the branch has taken care of its internal problems so we can get back to what we do best and that is to represent YOU the members. But remember to be safe because I know there are going to be occasions when letter carriers will be delivering mail in the dark

Just remember, you, the members, always rule.

TAMPA LETTER CARRIERS PRESENT BINGO

COME JOIN THE FUN

EVERY WEDNESDAY AND FRIDAY

DOORS OPEN AT 5:30

GAMES START AT 6:30

AT THE TAMPA LETTER CARRIERS HALL

3003 W. CYPRESS St.

Tampa, Fl. 33609

Outside The Lines

by Leslie Ray Garcia

At the Thursday, October 2 union meeting, common sense finally prevailed. The motion "that the branch supports Lenny Perez in whatever it takes for his legal defense to prove his innocence," was amended to the point that Branch 599 funds would not be used for this purpose. What was done was to allow Mr. Perez to use the branch hall at no charge to Mr. Perez to hold a dance and all proceeds would be donated to the defense fund. This writer believes that this was precisely what should have been proposed three months ago. A brother (or brothers) stated "...Mr. Perez has represented *all*, regardless if he liked you or disliked you...". I believe this statement is a deliberate misrepresentation and a blatant falsification because I can personally attest to and swear that I am not one of the all who have received said impartial representation.

During this union meeting formal charges were brought forth to impeach the current president. Twenty-three members signed their names to this documentation. Most of the individuals wrote their names when their names should have been printed with their signatures placed below each name. I wonder how could so many members have been so familiar with these extremely significant and detailed charges? Another question to ask is why so many of these individuals were not even in attendance at this meeting for the presentation of these charges?

Prior to the charges being read by the Recording Secretary, the President turned the meeting over to the Executive Vice President. The Executive Vice President then appointed a committee of three disinterested members as directed in the Constitution of the NALC. After the Executive Vice-President selected the three members, it was stated by one member that he would be unable to serve. The Executive Vice-President then asked for volunteers to replace that member. I raised my hand and the Executive Vice President stated "I'll take your name under advisement." Several days after the meeting I was telephoned by the chairman of the committee that, since I had volunteered, I was being placed on the committee as an alternate.

On October 7, 2003, I was notified by the chairman that I had been challenged by the Executive Vice President on the issue that I had written an article in the Branch paper that had spoken in favor of "Bingo/TLC, Inc." which was incorporated within one

of the charges. Mr. Executive Vice-President, where exactly did I state anything favorable about Bingo or TLC, Inc.?

On the issue of being ineligible for being appointed to this committee, I am challenging the Executive Vice-President's right to appoint any member for this committee because of a conflict of interest. For the information of all, the Executive Vice-President is also the Vice-President of TLC, Inc., and is associated with Bingo. If this is not a conflict of interest, what is? To be just, impartial and unbiased, a recusal should have been made by the Executive Vice-President. It is time to stop being a puppet, discontinue all the spin, and perform and conduct your duties, Mr. Executive Vice-President, under the by-laws of Branch 599 and under the criteria by which you were elected by the members.

In the Constitution of the NALC, Article 2, Branches, State Associations, Membership Section 1: "Membership in the National Association of Letter Carriers shall be open without regard to race, creed, color, sex, national origin, age, religion, handicap, or marital status.

"Membership shall be: (a). regular branch members who shall be non-supervisory employees in the Postal Career Service, and regular branch members who the executive council has determined were unjustly separated from the Postal Career Service, retirees from that Service who were regular members of the NALC when they retired, and persons leaving the Service with coverage under Office of Workers' Compensation Programs(OWCP). Such retirees, OWCP departees, and non-letter carrier regular members shall have no voice or vote in the branch in any matter pertaining to the ratification of a national working agreement, local memorandum of understanding, or proposed work stoppage:

"(b). present members of existing Federal Branches may retain their membership

"(c). present members who have left the Postal Service, or have been temporarily or permanently promoted to supervisor status, may retain their membership but shall be members only for the purpose of membership in the NALC Life Insurance Plan and/or NALC Health Benefit Plan. These members shall have no voice or vote in any of the affairs of such Branch, except they shall have a

(continued on page 7)

Outside The Lines *(from page 6)*

voice and vote at the Branch level upon matters appertaining to the NALC Life Insurance Plan, and/or the NALC Health benefit Plan, if they are a member thereof, and on any proposition to raise dues. These members are not eligible to be candidates for any State Association, Branch or National office, or delegates to any conventions. They may attend only that part of the meeting which concerns them, such as change of dues structure and information concerning Health or Life Insurance."

Doesn't this portion of the NALC constitution specifically address the limitations and activities with regard to persons in an OWCP status, retirees, non-letter carrier regular members and supervisors?

"Hypocrisy is the homage which vice pays to virtue." Francois de La Rochefoucaul

THINK ABOUT IT!



Clearwater Branch 2008 President Steve Halkias meets with Postmaster General Potter and Sen. Ted Kennedy as he receives the Branch Service Award, awarded to Branch 2008 for being the top branch in the nation for community service.

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And The Beat Goes On

by Ray Wallace

Wow! Where did September go to? Jim Good said to me, "Ray, we didn't receive your October article." I replied, "Damn! I sure forgot that." How, I don't know but I've been going to a few doctors and had that on my mind.

The October meeting had 226 members present. I'm sure one it was a record number of carriers at one meeting. Between the TLC, Incorporated meeting and the regular branch meeting, it all ended at 11:00 PM, which I'm sure is another record! It's nice to see when the call goes out to the members to attend a meeting to vote on an important issue they do come out for that vote.

If you have been attending the meetings this year, and read all of the articles in this paper, you know about all of the dissention going on. Ever since Jim Good was elected by a democratic vote of the members, he has been going through pure hell because of a few who he will not give them their way. For this, he must pay through all kinds of charges that he has to disprove. This includes charges levelled against President Good for actions which previous Branch 599 presidents have taken in the past, and which, until now, were okay for the rest of them to have taken.

Now, suddenly, it is not okay for the branch president to take such actions. Why? What has changed in the last two years? They write about unionism and the democratic way yet these same people are the one's who are doing the complete opposite.

I give Jim Good much credit for standing up for himself and the oath of office that he took when he became the president of Branch 599. If I was in his place, I would tell them all to go to hell and stick it where the sun don't shine. But that is exactly what they would want. Then they could take this branch over and do as they damn well please.

I'm sure Postal Management is loving all of this. Like Brother Russell Person said, all of this energy being used to fight each other is shameful and wasteful. With President Bush and his postal commission working on trying to destroy our jobs and our retirement, we need to come together as brothers and sisters.

Let us all pray that Branch 599 can continue to obtain presidents with the high caliber and high integrity of Jim Good. The only problem with Jim is that, after living all of his life with his last name, he doesn't know anything else but being "Good".

Lets stop all this nitpicking bull crap that is dividing this branch. There will be an election in the year 2004 for president. Let's do it the union and democratic way and vote at that time for the president as always. Let the Branch 599 members cast their vote for who they want as their president and then who ever is elected, let them do their job. No one deserves to be harassed when they take over the role of president of any branch. To have to step in to the job of president that someone else has left is hard enough.

Thanks to Brandon for their good turn out, which is very unusual for them. There were seven active and three retired in attendance.

I hope you all have a nice Thanksgiving and let us all pray for our troops over in Iraq and for the families that have lost a loved one and let us all remember the words some in this great country are trying to destroy:

"IN GOD WE TRUST".



NALC BRANCH 782 - BAKERSFIELD, CA.

Where Do You Stand?

by Clark Alday

Recording Secretary - Branch 599

As a long standing member of Branch 599, I am compelled to write this article. As you all know, any member can come to the union meetings and say what's on their mind. However, recently there has been a constant cutting down of our president by a select few who seem to be trying to destroy this branch and put the members at odds with each other. My brothers and sisters, this should not be!

The main object of concern seems to be bashing our president. In my opinion, President Good has been one of the best presidents I've seen since my career started with the Postal Service in 1967. He has been honest and open with all things connected with the union, our bylaws, the national constitution and anything else that may concern this branch.

President Good gets information to us expeditiously

and clearly. He runs our union meeting according to Robert's Rules of Order except allowing some of that select few to continue to talk although they are out of order.

I know President Good would be glad to meet with any member in private (without all this screaming and accusations that have been going on for the past few months) and discuss their concerns about the job he's doing.

I would suggest that you come to our next union meeting and see how professionally the meeting is run. If you would like to see a copy of Robert's Rules of Order just ask me and I will be glad to have you look through it.

President Good is looking out for the good of all members of Branch 599. *ARE YOU?*

Perspective

by David Brubaker

I would assume that most members in October's union meeting were uncertain about the outcome, specifically whether to pay for Lenny's legal fees (as I believe a lot of us thought we might) or vote it down. There seemed to be no middle ground. I did not talk to many of our carriers but those I did talk to wanted to help out, myself included.

I'd like to thank Lenny for the clarification of what his desire was. He stated that it wasn't financial support from the union funds that he sought, but rather just help in raising money for his legal defense. The decision made was the appropriate one. He has helped a great many of us (myself included). I hope this doesn't offend him but I've always looked at him as a *pit bull* when he assisted someone. That is, he didn't back down when he needed to stand firm.

The article by Jim Good about forced overtime (*TLC October*) was timely. However, I'd like to add a side note. We are no doubt short handed, but if you add operational hours into the mix, it justifies working work assignment and non-ODL overtime. In other words, a station's start time is 7:30AM, ending at 4:00PM, and everyone is required to be back off the street by

5:00PM (with additional overtime). It baffles me why management cannot start 12 hour ODL carriers earlier to have everyone back by 5:00PM rather than working non ODL overtime for the needs of the Post Office to have everyone back by 5:00PM. There are exceptions I'm sure, but there are some non ODL carriers who do not want the overtime.

After having read "*Too Tall's*" article, I'm not sure what we need to do to become "*one harmonious body*". It's probably me, but if I had a concern about how something was done officially or in my work environment, I would approach the individual to discuss my concern. It would be easier than filing a grievance or selecting a committee (costing us financially).

Jim Good has always been there for me and I'm sure the position he's in has not been easy. I believe there are other considerations that have not been taken into account. I'd like to see it resolved to everyone's satisfaction.

Until next time...

Health Benefits Report

by Detlev Aeppel

President Jim Good and I recently attended the 26th National Health Benefit Plan HBR Seminar which was held October 20th through October 23rd at the Tropicana Hotel in Las Vegas. Three hundred forty six Health Benefit Representatives from around the nation registered to attend. This included ninety seven new attendees. In addition to Thomas Young, Director, NALC Health Benefit Plan, there were five other national officers in attendance: President Bill Young, President Emeritus Vince Sombrotto, Chairman of Trustees Lawrence D. Brown, Trustee Daniel T. Rupp, and Trustee Randall L. Keller. The NALC Auxiliary was represented by President Lynne Jester, Vice President Joan Spero, Secretary Gloria Alexander, and Assistant Secretary Susan McNees.

President Emeritus Sombrotto started off with his trademark wit and smile but quickly moved on to the serious business at hand. Six years ago our Plan was in deep trouble. It was underfunded and in danger of being shut down by OPM. The Plan was saved by a lot of hard work and a little luck. Active letter carriers realized the value of preserving the Plan and enrolled in sufficient numbers to put the Plan back on a firm footing.

President Bill Young spoke next in his usual blunt and direct fashion. He stated that letter carriers have enemies in Congress and the White House who want to take away our benefits. He pointed out that forty five million people work full time in America and have NO health insurance whatsoever. Bill said that we should make no mistake about it that the Presidential Commission and others in Congress want the letter carriers to lose their health benefits. He stated that the best way to ensure that this never happens is by all letter carriers becoming e-Activists. When you volunteer to be an e-Activist, you agree to send an e-mail, send a letter, or make a phone call to a legislator when the crucial time for action comes. President Young also flatly stated that ANY letter

carrier that did not contribute to COLCPE, especially now that payroll deduction is available, simply did not want their job!

Thomas Young, Director Health Benefit Plan, gave us an overview of changes to the Plan. Premiums for active members will go up \$1.01 (to \$29.76) for Self and \$0.38 (to \$42.75) for Family. Annuitants will see premiums go up \$7.03 (to \$111.98) for Self and \$11.55 (to \$201.03) for Family. These rates are among the lowest in the USPS as well as in the FEHB system. These rates were held down by the large number of active carriers that joined or returned to the Plan, putting it in good financial condition. It is essential that more active carriers join so that the Plan can grow stronger and provide even better rates and services.

The Plan now has a program called CarePatterns Programs for Disease Management. This program assists improving Quality of Care and Quality of Life for members with chronic medical conditions such as asthma, diabetes, ulcers, and coronary artery disease. More than 12,300 members have used these programs which manage the individual, not just the chronic disease, by coordinating the patient, physician, pharmacist, and specially trained CarePatterns nurses to improve the member's quality of life while reducing overall healthcare costs.

The PPO directory will now be available on CD-ROM discs. The discs will be mailed out to all members this fall. These discs are cheaper and easier to update and distribute to the members than the paper books. Any member that wants the PPO-directory book instead will still be able to get one.

The Health Benefit Plan web site has also been expanded and improved. Simply go to www.nalc.org and click onto the Health Benefit Plan. Forms can now be readily downloaded by anyone that needs

(continued on page 11)

Health Benefits Report *(from page 10)*

them. New information on the Plan and the programs offered are available 24/7. There are also hyper links to Caremark and First Health.

Jerry Shipkin, R.PH is the Vice President of Clinical Services for Caremark, Inc. One of the topics Mr. Shipkin discussed was drug safety. He explained that one reason foreign drugs are cheaper is that they are not well regulated. Frequently these drugs are counterfeit, or defective, or not well tested. Generics are a different matter. It takes 12 years to bring a brand name drug to the market but only 3 years to bring a generic to market. Frequently generics are kept off the market when the brand name company is awarded a patent extension due to minor changes to the drug made only for the purpose of patent renewal. Mr. Shipkin emphasized Caremark's role in the development of CarePatterns and announced that the new Caremark web site will be on line Q1, 2004.

The site will be an interactive source for answers. Members will log on with a password and receive personalized service. Members will be able to track order information, access mailboxes for CarePatterns and other information sources, view drug histories, review the cost of drug test claims, and learn of drug availability choices.

David K. Nace, M.D. is the Senior Vice President and Corporate Medical Director of United Behavioral Health which has been providing services to the NALC Plan for the past three years. He impressed upon us the far reaching effects alcohol and depression have. Seventy percent of people hospitalized have alcohol issues that either caused or influenced their illnesses. Behavioral Health Disorders such as depression affect 25% of the national workforce. Depression is the leading cause of absenteeism. To meet these needs UBH has 2800 employees, 50,656 practitioners, 2500 network facilities, and 8 grant-funded full time research scientists. UHB can be accessed on the internet at www.liveandworkwell.com.

For the rest of the time, attendees were divided into groups for workshops on Eligibility, HIPAA, Open Season, Coordination of Benefits, Managing Your Health

Care, and Patient Safety. Director Tom Young organized a topnotch seminar to provide training for the HBR's. Everyone walked away with new insight on helping members make the most of our excellent Health Benefit Plan.

If you are not currently a member of the NALC Plan, you owe it to yourself and your family to find out if this is the right plan for you. Join the NALC Health Benefit Plan.

One more thing: Become an e-Activist. Enroll in payroll deduction for COLCPE. Do it now.

Health and Welfare Report by Russell Person

Ralph Parson, brother of Ella Winner Forest Hills Annex, passed away.

Joseph Piccandra, son of retiree "Picky" Piccandra, passed away.

Retiree Herbert Corzo, passed away 9/25/03

William Kuhn, father of Jackie Collings, TT Annex, passed away.





A Special Gift for You!

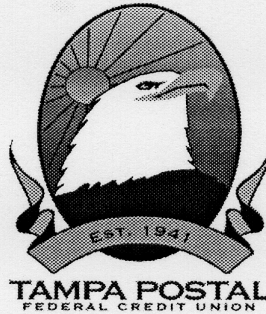
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