

# The Local Line

"A PPA Award Winning Publication"

The Official Voice of the  
Northwest Illinois Area Local

## Local Update by Jackie Engelhart

Floor Edition

June 28, 2006

### Meeting with A/ District Manager

On June 27 we had our second meeting with A/District Manager Nancy Rettinhouse. Present for the Union were myself, Dave Baskin and Calvin Taylor. Nancy is on detail from her position as the Postmaster of Grand Rapids, Michigan, and is known for her mastery of Function 4 staffing. We expressed our concern that management has, and continues to cut staffing in the associate offices to the point where supervisors and other crafts are performing clerk work. We told her we learned from Associate Office Director Kathy Stokes, that the Mount Prospect Post Office has a list of "First Responders", who are non-retail employees who are designated to be called for "lobby duty" when the customer line gets too long. Kathy said at Mount Prospect, the First Responders are the general clerk and two injured carriers. Nancy said First Responders was her idea, to use non-

retail clerks to direct customers to and assist them with the APC (Automated Postal Centers). Nancy stated the "First Responders" should be clerks, but we say if there were more clerks we wouldn't need "First Responders". Management continues to eliminate clerk jobs, and then must compensate by using other crafts and managers to perform clerk work. If the AO's were really staffed properly there would be no need for "First Responders". The reality is the continued staffing cuts in the AO's are based on "making budget" in Function 4.

### Palatine Medical Unit

We had requested that Nancy reconsider the decision to close the Palatine Medical Unit, and she agreed to do so, with no promises. She informed us that she had done some research on the issue both locally, and in other districts, and she could not agree to reopen the Palatine Medical Unit. Our grievance is at step 3 and the Postal Nurses also have a grievance on the unit closing.

We told her the main concern is that medical personnel be on site for medical emergencies, until an ambulance can be called. She said that she would be willing to hold drills for First Responders, (not to be confused with retail lobby "First Responders").

### Our First Responders

At Palatine we had a emergency shortly after the Medical Unit was closed, when an employee collapsed and later died in the Security Office. I had heard that an employee had revived Veronica before the ambulance came, and she introduced herself to me recently. The employee's name is Mae McGhee, and she is certified in CPR. She was in the right place at the right time, as she immediately began CPR with Supervisor Ted Blanton, as Veronica had stopped breathing. They were able to restore her breathing for a few minutes. They continued to perform CPR until the paramedics arrived, but were unsuccessful. Mae and Ted acted heroically in this instance, but USPS can and should reopen the Medical Unit.

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#### Special points of interest:

Meeting with A/District manager

Palatine Medical Unit

Our First Responders

Flats Sequencing System

Area Mail Processing

Postal Unions as of May 8

Ergonomics

EAP and the "HOPE Quilt"

### "Flats Sequencing System"

For those of you who read the "Great Lakes Area Update", a full page of information was provided on the FSS machine in the April edition. When we spoke with Nancy she stated that Palatine would probably be getting an FSS. I pulled out the Great Lakes Area article to see what this will mean for Palatine. "The Flats Sequencing System is more than a machine-it is a system that includes various modules to support the sequencing of flats. Those modules include: automated mail preparation, feeding, sweeping, staging and dispatch. A prototype machine will undergo a field test April through June. Once testing is completed, the machine will be removed, the results will be analyzed and used to develop a production machine. The prototype machine has 192 bins and can sort 16,500 flats per hour. The production machine will have 360 bins and will be able to sort 34,000 flats per hour. When the FSS machine is performing it will sort flats in delivery order using a two-pass process. Sequencing flats on the FSS machine is not the same as delivery point sequenced (DPS letters)- the second pass is processed immediately after the first pass. Unlike letters, multiple first-passes are not optional." Deployment is scheduled to begin in 2007 and the impact will be huge for Clerks, Mailhandlers, and Carriers. The article did not give staffing information, but it did refer to automated mail preparation. We will be sharing information on the FSS as we are able to get it. The intent of the USPS is to continue to reduce craft employees in all crafts to the extent possible and the FSS will affect 3 crafts.

### "Area Mail Processing"

We were told the FSS would be used to process 2C-Periodicals and Standard mail, and the AFSM's would still process first class. If Palatine does get the FSS, Palatine would most likely process Carol Stream's 2C and Standard flats. We already know that Irving Park got the APPS originally designated for Carol Stream. Palatine, it appears got an APPS before the decision to implement "Area Mail Processing", and Palatine's APPS machine is half the size of those at Irving Park Road and Chicago Metro Surface Hub. I am told they do not know if they can move an APPS but they are attempting to move one in Florida. The point is that we in the Northern Illinois and Chicago Districts are well on our way to Area Mail Processing (AMP). Irving Park will become part of the Northern Illinois District on November 1st. We continue to ask what is the status of the transportation between Carol Stream and Irving Park, as mail is being transported daily by contract drivers since the Irving Park began processing Carol Stream mail on their second APPS in April. We continue to hear nothing on this and nobody knows. We were told that most of Chicago's mail will now be processed at Cardiss Collins, which will result in too many MVS employees at Irving Park. In the meantime, contract drivers continue to move mail between Carol Stream and Irving Park. Irving Park will be the Regional Distribution Center for the Northern Illinois District and Chicago Metro will be the RDC for the Chicago District. USPS will continue to consolidate operations and continue to cut jobs. No craft or union is immune to this.

Postal Unions as of May 8, 2006

APWU	224,665
Postal Police	545
NALC	212,674
NPMHU	59,099
Rural Carriers	83,099
Postal Supervisors	33,062
Postmasters	8791
NPPN (Postal Nurses)	99
National Alliance	8561

### Ergonomics

I attended a meeting of the Palatine ERRP Committee recently, and was impressed with the dedication of the members. Coordinator Lynn Lacey opened the meeting, which was attended by our new A/Plant Manager Gregory Johnson. He made suggestions to the committee and promised them that he will support ERRP with his actions. Presentations were made by Supervisor Aaron Argullin, Camille Grubzak, and Syed Kaleemulla. Also present were Jomo Raschi, Emma Rafael, Bob LaFoe and new member Betty Bagley. ERRP stands for Ergonomic Risk Reduction Programs and the committee members are dedicated to finding ways to make postal job tasks less likely to cause injuries. They also recommend purchase of equipment to that end, such as lifts and more flats ergo carts. Suggestions or problems concerning ergonomics can be forwarded to the ERRP team.

### EAP and the "Hope Quilt"

Alice Crawford is the EAP Adviser for the Northern Illinois District. The EAP committee is sponsoring the Hope Memorial Quilt in honor of Postal Employees who have lost loved ones to suicide. The HOPE Quilt will display mini tote bags designed by employees and their families to honor loved ones lost to suicide. Employees are encouraged to participate, and the quilt will be displayed in September of 2006.