

Volume 47, Issue 3

JUNE-JULY 2023

# WMAL VOICE



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



# WMAL Voice

PO Box 2706  
 Grand Rapids, MI 49501  
 wmalvoice@yahoo.com  
 Editor: *Michael Greene*

## Executive Board

MICHELLE MACK, *president* (616) 822-5627  
 mrmack4573@gmail.com

LINDA CHANDLER, *treasurer* (616) 776-1489  
 treasurer@wmal.org

AWANDA JENNINGS, *recording secretary* (616) 977-1050

SUZI BOYD *clerk craft a director* (616) 581-4539  
 wmalccd@att.net

AMEKA JONES, *clerk craft b director* (616) 560-3279

CHRIS FISHER, *motor vehicle craft director* (616) 308-8787  
 cafisher61@gmail.com

TODD HODGES, *sergeant-at-arms* (616) 776-1489

JENNIFER MCKINNON, *maintenance craft director* (616) 350-5433

## Other Local Representatives

JENNIFER RIZZON, *human relations rep*

SCOTT ACHTERHOFF, *retirement specialist* (616) 977-1050  
 scott\_achterhoff@yahoo.com

JOSHUA GRAY, *young members committee* (616) 776-1489  
 APWUsteward281@gmail.com

LINDA CHANDLER, *union hall manager* (616) 822-3520

RAYMOND NOVAKOSKI, *retiree chapter president* (616) 560-7747

## Important Phone Numbers

GRAND RAPIDS MAIN OFFICE 776-1489  
 Fax: 776-1536

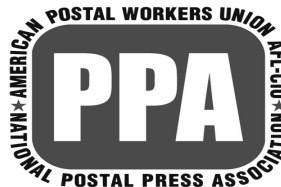
P-CAMPUS OFFICE 977-1050  
 Fax: 977-1020

OFFICE OF PERSONNEL MANAGEMENT 888-767-6738  
*retirement line*

HR SHARED SERVICES CENTER 877-477-3273  
*option 5*

## REPRESENTING:

Ada · Allendale · Alto · Baldwin · Belmont · Big Rapids · Bitely · Blanchard · Bradley · Branch · Burnips · Byron Center · Caledonia · Cannonsburg · Cedar Springs · Comstock Park · Coopersville · Coral · Custer · Dorr · Douglas · Fennville · Ferrysburg · Fountain · Free Soil · Gowen · Grand Haven · Grand Rapids · Grandville · Grant · Hamilton · Hesperia · Holland · Hopkins · Howard City · Hudsonville · Jamestown · Jenison · Lamont · Macatawa · Marne · Mecosta · Middleville · Moline · Morley · New Era · Newaygo · Nunica · Paris · Pierson · Pullman · Ravenna · Remus · Rockford · Rodney · Rothbury · Sand Lake · Scottville · Shelby · Shelbyville · Sparta · Spring Lake · Stanwood · Trufant · Walhalla · Wayland · West Olive · Zeeland



**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](mailto:wmalvoice@gmail.com) of anything you would like included. Pictures are welcomed!

## *The Retiree's Corner*

*By Ray Novakowski, Retiree Chapter President*

I would like to congratulate President Amy Puhalski on being appointed the new APWU Central Regional Coordinator. Sharyn Stone announced her retirement from the position April 30, 2023. Sharyn held the position for the past twenty years and was always helpful to local unions in the Central Region and I wish her a happy and long retirement.

Amy was appointed by APWU President Mark Dimondstein, with the full approval of the APWU National Executive Board. Amy will officially begin the duties of the position on June 5, 2023. I personally feel that President Dimondstein made an excellent choice as Amy is a true unionist, working hard for all the members. Amy has worked tirelessly to gain knowledge on union issues and has given many hours to the local, state, and national APWU. She is a true leader and has moved from steward to local VP and local President and has served on many committees at the national conventions and recently served as the Director of Education for the MPWU.

Amy, I am proud to call you a friend and fellow union member. I have personally witnessed your growth and dedication through the years. I have had the privilege to work with you and witnessed your knowledge and professionalism in all the positions you have held. You have made APWU a better place and an example to all you represent.



Congratulations on your new appointment. I know you will be a great asset to the membership and will continue to serve with integrity.

Thank you for your service and dedication.

Yours in union solidarity,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Raymond Novakowski".

Raymond Novakowski

Retiree Chapter Meetings  
2nd Tuesday at 11 a.m., at the WMAL Union  
Hall (2554 Burlingame SW, Wyoming, MI),  
in the following months: February, April, June,  
September & November.

## ***FMLA***

***By Jennifer Rizzon, Human Relations Representative***

I want to remind everyone that on our APWU local website, there is good information on FMLA that you can access any time. There is the APWU FMLA Guide, 1250 Hour Rules, New Child Requirements, FMLA Q&A, and the FMLA forms for Employees Own Serious Illness and Family Member's Serious Illness. In the APWU FMLA guide there are even examples on how the FMLA forms should be completed by your doctor.

Your doctor who is completing the forms needs to be specific in her/his description of your conditions and limitations. It may help if you provide a copy of your job description to your doctor.

There are the following job descriptions for automation clerk, manual/distribution clerk, carrier, flat sorter and small parcel bundle sorter, available on the WMAL 281 website (our local) under the OWCP tab. Bring the completed forms to your union office and we will fax them for you to the FMLA dept and give you a conformation that the fax went through. Management does not need to see or review your FMLA papers.

I suggest after a few days, you call the FMLA dept just to confirm they have received your paperwork, and that it is in process. They may require some corrections or additional information. If you call and are told your FMLA has been approved, ask them what parameters they have listed on the computer system, and make sure it matches what your doctor has listed on your FMLA paperwork. Management only needs to know the parameters on your FMLA. Please keep all paperwork regarding your FMLA. If you have questions or need help with your FMLA forms, you may contact me or ask your steward.

Jennifer Rizzon



## ***Safety Captains 2023***

***By Jennifer Rizzon, Human Relations Representative***

We are trying to get safety captains in place at the P Campus for safety walks. Last fall, management posted a sign-up sheet for those clerks & Mail handlers that would be interested in being on the safety team.

I updated the safety captain check list to make them pertain to the P campus. I had the safety department review my checklist, and it was decided to break down the safety walk checklist for each day of the week and have one area to be the focus for each day. There are items to be checked daily, and others to do on a weekly basis.

Laura Wagemaker will be our EAS contact person for Safety. And the safety captain is waiting to meet with Laura.

Right now, we have Lynnette Karaffa, Amad Khan, Desiree West, Daniel Roskoskey, Scott Dabey (MH) and Jennifer Rizzon are the safety captains. We are looking for more safety captains. The goal is to have a safety captain for each day and tour. We all need to work together because safety is everyone's responsibility. Please submit 1767's to your supervisor with your safety concerns and suggestions. Safety Captain's would also like to get copies of any 1767's you turn into management. You can take them to the APWU union office to be given to me.

Jennifer Rizzon

## Get Involved In Your Union!

By Dana Mclean, steward

I want to thank the local for sending me to the Michigan Educational Conference in Kalamazoo last month. It's always great to take classes taught by National Business Agents. So much knowledge and experience. Every time I take a class, I learn something new and isn't that the whole point?

When the union fights for issues to be included in the contract, it's to better the bargaining unit workers. So, when the contract came out with a guarantee of 4 hours when a PTF is scheduled, I was thrilled. No longer can management schedule a PTF to work for 2 hours in the morning and wait all day and schedule a PTF for 2 hours in the afternoon. So, the union gets it and PTF's complain that they must STAY for 4 hours. Are you kidding? Work the 4 hours!!

One of the conversations I had with one of our business agents was the fact that if you are working and not under supervision (for example level 18's on Saturdays) you are entitled to level 7 pay. If you are not getting paid level 7, get a hold of your steward.

We need more people to get involved in the union. We need members especially in the AO's to get involved, come to the meetings and become stewards. When we educate our members to stand up for themselves and know the contract, it makes it harder for management to abuse their rights. There is a committee called Young Members and it's for our brothers and sisters 18-35. If you are in that age group, YOU are the future of the APWU and we need more of you to get involved.

Lastly, I want to personally congratulate Amy Puhalski on her HUGE advancement to the posi-

tion of Central Regional Coordinator. I've had the honor of learning so much from Amy and have watched her be the bad ass she is for quite a few years! I have so much respect for her and have a lot of faith that she will exceed expectations in her new role! Congratulations Amy and thank you for all you have done for me and WMAL!

I hope everyone has a wonderful, safe, and healthy summer!



In solidarity,

Dana McLean





# NOW ★ HIRING

We're looking  
for clerks,  
carriers,  
sales support  
and more!

It's not just a career.  
It's delivering for  
America.

Apply today at  
[usps.com/careers](https://usps.com/careers)



©2021 USPS®. All rights reserved. Please recycle. Poster NH21-FLZ-SP-2005



# EMERGENCY CARE FOR BEHAVIORAL HEALTH AND SUBSTANCE USE

Leaving the emergency department after receiving mental health or substance abuse treatment can be a vulnerable time. To help protect the health and safety of APWU Health Plan members, anyone who receives treatment in the emergency department or hospital for mental health or substance abuse must have a follow-up appointment with a primary care doctor within 30 days.

Research suggests that follow-up care for people with mental illness is linked to fewer repeat emergency department visits and avoidable readmissions, improved physical and mental function, and increased compliance with follow-up instructions. Among other benefits, close follow-up:

- Reduces incidents of suicidal ideation, suicide attempts, and completed suicide
- Reduces substance abuse and improves entry into recovery
- Reduces emergency department use and hospital admissions, and lengths of stay
- Leads to better identification and treatment of behavioral and physical health issues

This is also important when seeking substance use treatment. Hospitals are increasingly filled with people suffering from medical complications of substance use disorders (SUD). Patients with SUD have longer lengths of stay, higher costs, and higher readmission rates.

## HOW CAN THE APWU HEALTH PLAN HELP?

Both the **High Option** and the **Consumer Driven Option** cover mental health and substance abuse care. For services received in a network emergency department, members pay 15 percent of the plan allowance. Please refer to your plan documents for more details about your specific coverage.



### Need help finding a doctor?

To find a primary care doctor, log in to your member portal, visit your member website, or contact APWU Health Plan.

**1-800-222-2798**

**1-800-622-2511 (TDD)**

**8:30 a.m. – 6:30 p.m. ET**

**Monday – Friday**

**[apwuhp.com](http://apwuhp.com)**



TOGETHER.  
BETTER HEALTH.

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

(800) 222-2798

## Getting It Out There

By Michael Greene, Editor

Greetings! Hopefully everyone is enjoying the summer months and getting a chance to spend time with their family and friends. Truthfully, I didn't plan to write anything this month, but then I realized that I couldn't find much to fill in the pages for the newsletter, so here we are.

I would like to give my congrats to Amy Puhalski on her transition to her new position. I've known Amy for a good number of years, and I've known her to be a straightforward, honest and committed to the union, 100%. From what I've witnessed during my postal time I think it's safe to say that our union doesn't get enough credit for the work that they do. And I believe Amy has been at it for about 13 years or so (I'm horrible with dates). Again, I'm giving credit for what I've seen her do: organizing the various events for union members (ex. Christmas party – adult and kids, group outings), different trainings, arbitrations, meetings about grievances/investigative interviews, managing different personalities, etc. Not to mention members showing up to the union office without union time scheduled and having to put aside what she's working on to deal with them. Say what you want, but I'm sure if most of us were working on something important and had to drop it out of no fault of our own and handle something else we'd be pretty agitated about it. Yes, they are our union representatives/stewards. They're also human beings who are trying their best to give us the representation that we need and deserve. As I mentioned, Amy has a passion for the union and I'm sure that she is going to excel in her new position. I hate seeing her go but she needs to do what's best for her and I'm confident that Michelle is going to do a GREAT job picking up where Amy left off.

Michelle has been a knowledgeable union steward and we're fortunate to have her step in and assume the role of President. Thank you both for everything!

Attending the union meetings, I'm going to reiterate some of the talking points I've heard mentioned. Say it enough times and it will hopefully sink in: ask for your steward. Clock over to union time when your manager has told you that you are able to go and meet with your steward. The union stewards have said many times that they are not able to deal with issues on the go (if you're stopping them while they're walking to wherever they

are heading and possibly preoccupied).

Again, this is plain decency. They are humans trying their best. They could be going to an important meeting and trying to prepare themselves mentally for what they are going to encounter. Or they could be thinking about going to help out one of your fellow brothers or sisters who has already scheduled their union time in proper fashion. Give them some leeway and understand the load they may be carrying.

If you are working for the US Postal Service and you have a schedule that comes with the job you bid for, show up to work. If you do not like the hours or schedule, bid out. There may be another person who would like your schedule but if you are not committed to the job, you should seek out something else that would fit you better. Life is too short to not be happy. But not showing up for work reinforces to management that the work can be done without your services if you are not showing up. I think it's disrespectful to the people who busted their asses before us to help build the union and receive all of the great benefits that we have. I'd suggest you go outside of the postal service and see what other employers are offering. I know the job has its moments – trust me I do – but if you are employed, do your job until you decide what your next path is.

With all that being said, I figure now is a good time to share a bit of information about me. I want to say I've been doing this position as the editor for just under two years now. I honestly didn't want to do it initially, but I am happy that I was able to help for the time that I did. It has been a learning curve and was also interesting to see all of the little things that go into the position as editor. I never intended on doing this for the long haul. It was my plan to do it to help out for a bit (do my share) and then hand it over for someone else to pick it up and do a better job than I was able to. I think that I'm getting to that point where I'm ready to move on. I have other things that I want to focus on, and they are going to require more of my attention to bring them to where I want





them to be. I have had an enjoyable time serving as the editor. Truly. I appreciate the feedback I got from those who shared it and I would encourage those of you who are able to step up, to do so. Feel free to improve on the work being done. Definitely looking forward to see a different take on promoting the Western Michigan Area Local and our great union.

Last but not least, thank you. Thank you for the opportunity and for reading the newsletter and being a part of the union. I'm not sure when I'll stop, but I feel that it's about time for me to shift my focus and priorities in a different direction.

All the best,

Michael Greene



*Amy,  
Thank you for being you. Thank you for fighting for us all as long and as hard as you did. You were passionate about the work you did and I admire anyone who gives their all into what they care about. I wish you all the best and I hope you do an even better job in your new position. Enjoy the next chapter in your postal ventures, my friend. You're the best! :-)*

### 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](https://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](https://VeteransCrisisLine.net) to download free Veterans Crisis Line materials so you can tell others how to do it, too.

# CONSUMER DRIVEN OPTION & YOUR PCA

Every member who enrolls in the APWU Health Plan Consumer Driven Option (CDHP) receives a Personal Care Account (PCA). Each January, the APWU Health Plan funds your account:

**\$1,200 per year for Self Only or \$2,400 per year for Self Plus One and Self and Family**

Your PCA covers all eligible expenses at 100%. For example, if you are ill and go to a network doctor for a \$60 visit, the doctor will submit your claim and the cost of the visit will be deducted automatically from your PCA. You pay nothing.

And the best news? In-network preventive and maternity care are covered at 100% and does not count against your PCA (see CDHP Section 5 of our Federal Brochure).

## Example

Balance in PCA (Self Only)	\$1,200
Minus the cost of your visit	- 60
Balance remaining in PCA	\$1,140

## Roll over unused funds in your PCA.

If you have money in your PCA at the end of the year, you can roll over the balance to the next year, as long as you stay enrolled in this plan. The maximum amount allowed in your PCA balance in any given year is **\$5,000** Self Only enrollment and **\$10,000** Self Plus One and Self and Family enrollment.

## How your PCA works:

1

Your full PCA balance is available in January. Use your PCA for any eligible expenses.

2

If you use up your PCA funds, you need to satisfy your annual net deductible.

3

After you satisfy the annual plan deductible, you pay coinsurance—a percentage of the cost of covered healthcare—and the plan pays the rest.

4

If you reach the out-of-pocket maximum, the plan pays 100% of your covered healthcare costs for the rest of the year.

If you want more information on the PCA, go to [www.apwuhp.com](http://www.apwuhp.com) and click on *Become a Member*. Under *Consumer Driven Option* you will find a link to the *Personal Care Account*.



TOGETHER.  
BETTER HEALTH.

[www.apwuhp.com](http://www.apwuhp.com)  
(800) 222-2798

# Happy Retirement!!!!

(Congratulations & enjoy your next chapter in life!)

condolences to:



Deepest Sympathies to member David Jilote on the passing of his grandmother.

# Welcome To Our New Members!!

JASMINE JONES  
SAHYRAH HAIRSTON  
L'NAI SANFORD  
DAWN SMITH  
DAVES SEPTER  
KARIE THOMAS  
AARON DAVIS

*Cover photo courtesy of cottonbro studio via pexels.com*

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

**Union Hall Rentals**  
**2554 Burlingame Ave SW, Wyoming**  
**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](http://www.wmal.org)*

*\*meeting minutes*

*\*steward contact information*

**Next Union Meeting:**

# July 2023

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