

Postal *Press* Newsletter

AMERICAN POSTAL WORKERS UNION

NATIONAL POSTAL PRESS ASSOCIATION

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Is your coffee cup full?

By Tony Carobine, President

A young clerk's responsibilities included bringing the judge a cup of coffee at the start of every day. Each morning, the judge was enraged that his coffee cup arrived only two-thirds full. The clerk explained that he had to rush to get the coffee delivered while it was still hot, which caused him to spill some of it along the way. None of the judge's yelling and insults produced a full cup of coffee, until he finally threatened to cut the clerk's pay by one-third if he continued to bring one-third less coffee than the judge requested.

The next morning the judge was greeted with a cup of coffee full to the brim...and the next morning...and the morning after that. The judge couldn't resist gloating over his success, and he smugly complimented the clerk on his new technique. "Oh, there's not much to it," the clerk admitted happily. "I take some coffee in my mouth right outside the coffee room and spit it back in the cup when I get outside your office."

Just as the clerk improvised (albeit in an unappealing way) to fulfill an assignment, we must also be creative when it comes to maintaining a strong union. In particular, we hear a lot nowadays about membership apathy. For example, all we need to do is look at the lack of participation in union elections and union events on all levels to see that apathy is alive and well. Being upset about this problem is not enough. Each of us has a responsibility to explore ways to overcome it.

A look into the history of the labor movement reveals that most victories came about because of rank and file participation. The recipe for a strong and successful union is membership involvement. While we can single-handedly represent members in the grievance procedure, we cannot do so when it comes to other matters of importance

to union members, such as privatization schemes or legislative initiatives. These activities, among others require a collective effort by members and officers alike.

Loyalty and Commitment

Automatic loyalty and commitment to the union doesn't just happen today as was

union, directly and indirectly. In this regard, consider the following questions. Does the paper portray the union as an "institution" or an organization made up of real people? Do members continually ask, "What is **the union** going to do about this problem?"

Presenting information in a way that brings a "human touch" to the paper and in-

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more commonplace in the past. Furthermore, while union officers and activists generally have a firm attachment to the union, this is not the case for most members. Building an attachment to the union is an area that demands constant attention.

A key element in building a loyal membership is communication. We must keep members informed. We can have the best contract, handle grievances properly and still end up with a weak organization if members aren't aware of what the union does and feel no loyalty or commitment to the union.

An effective communications program is an essential ingredient for every union. However, it's not enough to institute a one-way communications program that "passes down" information from the union's officers to its members.

In order to be effective, communication must be a two-way street. Careful attention should be given to how information published in a union paper is presented, and most importantly, received. A well-balanced publication should not only inform the members, but also encourage participation in the

cluding the membership will help overcome the perception that the union is not some hard, cold institution located in a faraway place, but instead an organization made up of real people – members and officers alike. Using this approach is a step towards building a loyal membership.

People like to read about people. Themselves first and others second. By striving to bring a human touch to a union publication and including the membership, the paper becomes much more interesting and the union is less likely to be perceived as an institution. The objective is to develop the paper into a forum for an exchange of ideas between all members.

Union publications that employ what is called "member-oriented" labor journalism enjoy the greatest amount of success. By including the rank and file in the publication, by making it "**the member's publication,**" two things happen. Readership increases and members are likely to see the union as **their** organization and as a result are more likely to be supportive and get involved. *Please see **Is your coffee cup full?**, page 2*

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This publication is 100% union printer produced: Union typeset, Union layout, Union printed.

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Is your coffee cup full?

Continued from page 1

Member-oriented publications enjoy a high readership.

In the book: *The New Labor Press, Journalism for a Changing Union Movement*; published in 1992, the authors stressed the value of a union publication as the primary vehicle for exchanging information. These observations about union publications are still valid today. "... In effective organizations, of course, information is not a commodity that moves along one-way channels. A truly vital union – any truly vital institution – recognizes that the flow of information must be a two-way street. Union members, after all, aren't passive receptacles for information. They're men and women struggling to improve the quality of their lives. These men and women need a forum, a place to exchange their thoughts with others, to learn from others, to test their ideas against others' ideas. Unions need to provide this forum by opening wide channels through which information can flow, not just from leader to member, but from member to member, member to leader. Within the labor movement, the trade union publication offers what may be the single best forum for this absolutely essential exchange of information. ..."

In regard to publication content, the book offers this observation: "...effective union education and communication means using



as much available space as possible to reflect the experiences and voices of the union membership." It also goes on to say "... People respond and get involved when they have an understanding of what's going on and believe they have a reasonable chance to change things. ..."

While all available mediums should be used to communicate with the membership; such as electronic communication, there is no substitute for a member-oriented union publication delivered to the homes of union members and their families. The member then has two choices.

Pick it up and read it or pick it up and throw it away. Given the appropriate member-oriented content, the publication will be read!

The bottom line is this. If not enough emphasis is placed on communication and union members are left unaware of the basic purpose of unions or what the union does, will they get actively involved, or (in some cases) will they continue union membership? Unlikely!

Maintaining an effective communications program should be a priority of every union at all levels. Without the membership being well informed, without a form of communication to provide direction, and absent a forum for members to express their views, how can we expect to maintain a strong union?

Promoting the union

Many members (or potential members) are not aware of the importance of union membership, and therefore may not realize that the salary and benefits enjoyed today by postal workers were not generously provided by management but were achieved because of the union. Articles of this nature can stimulate participation and bring about an increased awareness of the union.

Interviewing long time (or retired) members about how conditions were at the time they began working for the Postal Service compared to now is an excellent way to present such information. Also, most of these individuals have very fascinating

stories to tell that will make good human-interest columns. Such a column demonstrates the importance of the union in the lives of members and illustrates that the union is made up of real people.

Members or potential members are more inclined to listen to people they perceive most like themselves. In other words, they will listen to their peers more than anyone else, especially when it involves promotion of the union. Every opportunity possible should be used to promote the union through the experiences of real members instead of solely relying upon union leaders.

Printed communication: The glue that makes a good local great

By Edward J. Brennan,
Secretary-Treasurer

In recent years we have seen small locals disappear and large locals shrink into much smaller locals. We have seen locals pick up associate officers sometimes over 100 miles away and in some cases merge with others.

How do the gaining locals communicate with these outlying members? How do the gaining officers keep the members of the local informed of their rights, duties, etc.? How do they communicate and keep a well-informed membership in the local? That is best done through the use of a well-written educational tool called a newsletter.

If you already have a newsletter in your local or state organization is it being used in the most efficient and most informative way or is it just made up of fillers and copied material that takes up space? Perhaps it is time for a review of your newsletter and a get together with the editor to study ways of making the newsletter the beacon of knowledge that it can become and a proud voice of the membership.

Are all of the officers contributing articles for the newsletter? Are copies being sent to all members? Are members in outlying offices contributing in the newsletter? These are all questions that should be asked when the officers and the editor meet to discuss ways of making the newsletter an outstanding educational tool that keeps the members informed.

After all, the editor is the guardian and custodian of the newsletter, while the newsletter itself is the property of the membership. The position of editor should be given the respect it is due as it is one of the most important offices of the local. The duties and responsibilities should be outlined in the local constitution.

The editor should also be given training and a constitutional right to attend the meetings of the APWU National Postal Press Association (PPA) as well as membership in the PPA. The president should also be a member of the PPA. Both the editor and the president should attend PPA Conferences to learn about the many aspects of effective communication. Of special importance is

the legal issues class whereby participants learn what can legally be put in print and thus avoid lawsuits, etc.

The president and editor can also, and should also attend the other workshops so they both know how to write articles to make their newsletters one of the best educational tools in the country. They can even enter their newsletter in the PPA Awards Program.

The next conference is this coming August in Des Moines, Iowa. Both the president and editor should have a constitutional right to at-

tend every PPA Conference. Both should know everything possible to make their newsletter the best educational and informative tool of the local and something that reflects back on the union as a source of pride for the local membership.

What kind of newsletter you have is what you make it. It's up to you. Check out your newsletter today and learn how to make it the best it can be. The PPA is here to put you on the right path and keep you there. All you have to do is set up your newsletter to be a winner. Remember: It's up to you!



Question: Do you write to inform or to impress?

By Hank Greenberg, Honorary Member
PPA Advisory Council

I appreciate receiving many local and state APWU publications and read every single issue. I never fail to be impressed by the quality of writing and the explanation of important issues facing the membership. In my opinion editors are doing a great job. As with all local and state publications, many of the articles are written by the officers and that's what I would like to review in this article.

For example, all too often an officer will use too many abbreviated titles of local and national issues when it would be best to "spell it out" to assure that everyone understands what you are talking about. After all, isn't that why you are writing in the first place?

When I began as a local editor the only correction I made in an officer's report was spelling errors. When members came and asked me to explain what the officer was referring to, I realized "we" were talking for granted every member knew what we were talking about. On that day and for the rest of my career as an editor, I "spelled it out" whenever I thought it would help the mem-

ber-reader to better understand the subject.

Regardless of how long you have been or will be an editor, we can always learn something.

2017 dues notice sent

A dues notice letter and membership application for 2017 was mailed to PPA members on Wednesday, October 26. Occasionally, we find that dues notices are laid aside which then requires additional notices or phone calls as reminders. Your help in making sure your dues for the coming year are paid in a timely fashion would be appreciated.

Upon receipt of your dues, a 2017 PPA Membership/Press Identification Card will be prepared and sent to you provided your digital photo is already on file with the PPA. If your digital photo is not on file (or you would like to submit an updated photo), please email the photo to ppa@apwupostalpress.org.

Make it snappy, keep it short

By Jenny Gust, Editor-at-Large

Make it Snappy

What am I referring to in the subhead you see above? Why it's the headline of course. It's very easy to just put President's Column (Clerk Craft, Maintenance you name it) at the top of your president's article each month. But if you take the time and put a little effort into it you can do much better. Just read the article over a few times. Read until you can pull out a headline. There will be something in the article that will jump out. It will tell what

the article is about – short and sweet. Or at least have the headline tell the most exciting part of the article if the article is about a lot of things. What you want to do is lead the person into reading the article. If you can get them started with a snappy headline, chances are they will end up reading the entire article. This brings me to the next subject . . . keep it short.

Keep it Short

If you have a writer (or perhaps it's you!) who goes on and on and on, try to shorten it up. People have little time and patience to

read long, rambling articles. It's one thing if they are reading a novel, but the union publication is not generally something they want to spend all day on. When I am faced with an article that goes two pages or more I just glance around it to see what is interesting to me. Yes sometimes I do go back and read the whole thing but often as not I might just read the opening sentences to find the good stuff.

If you just can't shorten it up, one way to help is to use subheads. That way it doesn't seem as long and can be read in small bites. Perhaps the writer has mentioned grievances, safety, and COPA. Using subheads to mark the paragraphs as you go along will help to break the article up. Then it won't seem as long and if the reader has to put the paper down, they can see where they left off when they get back to it.

Taking my own advice, I am keeping this short and hopefully the headline was snappy! Happy Holidays!

Effective communication requires complete attention

Whatever we attempt in life, communication is involved to a greater or lesser degree depending on our situation, stage of life or vocation. Our ways of communicating also vary but two aspects remain stable for almost everyone: Nearly all people need to communicate and we can almost all learn to improve our communicating skills.

Communication is one of those skills that apply to everyone and one that can be improved and refined. We need to be more cognizant of our ability in this area.

Communication is the sharing of ourselves, as well as the passing of information. Learning to listen well is a very important communication skill – to really listen well, we learn to listen “actively,” be-

ing alert to the full message – what is said and what isn't said. To listen well doesn't mean we must always agree, it only means we intend to try to understand what is being said and what it means.

Being alert to visual skills is also important in communication. What we don't say, we often impart with our silences, our gestures, facial expressions and body language.

In addition to hearing, seeing, silences and body motion, we also communicate by tone of voice and emotion. To really communicate well, we must be able to listen, to be attentive, to speak, to put ideas into words or on paper and to be able to share with others in ways that fit the relationship.

Avoid the charge of libel

You can always be sued. The suit may not prevail against you because the person suing may not want to pursue it any further, or the suit has no merit, but you can still be sued. Therefore, it's best to be careful with controversial subjects.

There is a rule of thumb: “when in doubt – leave it out,” but this is not always the proper route. If you think, however, that running a certain photo, article, cartoon, or piece will bring out the worst in someone, strong enough for them to want to sue you or your local, maybe you shouldn't run it.

Your local can be ruined by a large libel suit. So could you. You don't want your local to disappear just because of the newsletter you work hard to produce.

Unsure of whether or not an article is libelous or inappropriate? Your Postal Press Association can help. Upon request, (if the material has not already been published) the PPA will provide a confidential review and offer an opinion. Over the years this service has helped to avoid many potentially costly lawsuits.

A newsletter's purpose

- Inform members about the union, its activities, its challenges, its successes.
- Motivate members to retain a high level of interest in the union, and too participate in union activities.
- Show members that the union's interests are the members' interests.
- Motivate nonmembers to join.
- Provide a document of record.
- Support a positive image of the union.
- Interest members in learning more about their union.

Editors: Plan now for 2017 PPA Awards Program

Editors should plan now on entering the 2017 PPA Awards Program by being on the lookout for material to enter from their newsletters published since June 2015. The 2017 program will be developed soon after which editors will be notified of the timeframe to submit entries. The award categories are expected to be relatively the same as in 2015.

First place and honorable mention awards in the following categories were included in the 2015 program: editorial, news story, feature story, headline, cartoon, photo, community service, creative writing, non-postal labor story, new editor, three overall excellence and two website awards.

To assist with selecting material to enter, following are guidelines used as part of the judging process.

BEST EDITORIAL:

1. Does the editorial present the case through effective argument?
2. Is the editorial clearly understood?
3. Is there a clear indication of honesty and sincerity?
4. Is there a balance in the presentation?
5. Is the editorial constructive; does it offer an alternative?

Note: An editorial is an article of comment or opinion.

BEST NEWS STORY:

1. Does the news story clearly report an event or events of a timely or current nature?
2. Does the headline capture your attention and accurately reflect the story?
3. Does the lead sentence accurately reflect the subject of the story?
4. Does the writer cover the subject without editorializing?
5. Does the news story hold your attention and interest?
6. Are the 5 W's covered?
7. Is the information accurate?

Note: A news story tells news and includes who, what, where, when, why and how. It is written in the "third person" – therefore, the word "I" is not used. There is no editorializing in the article, although the article might have a clear "point of view." Any opinions are included in quotes, with the person having said those words getting credit for having said them.

BEST FEATURE STORY:

1. Is the feature story an original story?

2. Does the feature story cover the subject in depth?

3. Is the headline effective and attention-getting and accurately reflect the story?

4. Is the story written without editorializing?

Note: A feature story is an in-depth article exploring background issues, personalities or activities of individuals, emphasizing the human or entertaining aspects of a situation.

BEST HEADLINE:

1. Does the headline capture your attention?

2. Does the headline show originality?

3. Does the headline accurately reflect the content of the article?

Note: Judge only the headline, not the article.

BEST CARTOON:

1. Does the cartoon display originality?

2. Does the cartoon capture your attention?

3. Is the cartoon effective in conveying a message?

BEST PHOTO:

1. Does the photo display originality?

2. Does the photo capture your attention?

3. How is the quality of the photo?

4. Has the photo been adequately cropped, if necessary?

5. Is the photo effective in conveying a message?

BEST COMMUNITY SERVICE:

1. Does the story adequately describe the member(s) or organization's contribution to the community?

2. Does the story cover the subject in depth?

3. Does the story hold your attention and interest?

BEST CREATIVE WRITING:

1. This category covers fiction, poetry, humor or any form of serious writing with a distinctively creative touch.

2. Does it have meaning? Is there a point or is it rambling words and letters?

3. Does it have relevance to postal or union life or related issues?

BEST NON-POSTAL LABOR STORY:

1. This category includes stories about non-postal labor union activity or non-postal

labor-oriented topics. (The story need not be a first-hand account.)

2. Is the subject of significance?

3. Is the article clearly written?

4. Is it clear why postal workers should be interested in the story?

HANK GREENBERG AWARD FOR BEST NEW EDITOR:

(Two Different Issues)

Besides the physical makeup and content, this award recognizes a new editor striving to produce a union publication that exemplifies dedication, sincerity and professionalism.

Named in honor of past PPA President Hank Greenberg, this award signifies the type of spirit, determination and leadership that Brother Greenberg displayed as president for over 17 years.

BEST WEBSITE:

1. Look for appealing design.

2. Quality of content and appropriateness of subject matter.

3. Ease of navigation.

OVERALL EXCELLENCE:

(Single Issue)

Best Professional and Non-Professional.

1. Look for planning, layout and overall design.

2. Adequate use of photos and/or graphics.

3. Quality of reproduction.

4. Good use of headlines.

5. Quality of proofreading.

6. Balance of content and appropriateness of subject matter.

Entries required

Consideration for awards is only given to the entries submitted to the Awards Committee. Publications that do not submit entries are not considered.

Dues must be paid

In accordance with the PPA Constitution, current editor members must pay their 2017 dues by February 1, 2017 in order to be eligible to participate in the Awards Program, while new editors have until May 1.

Awards Program material

Awards Program rules and entry forms will be made available upon completion of the Award Committee's work on the program.

Is this OK to publish?

“Nominations for local union office will take place at the January union meeting. I have served in my current position for the past three years and plan on running again. I would appreciate your support.”

This wording is an excerpt from an officer’s report article in a local union newsletter.

Is this statement appropriate for an officer’s report article, or is it a potential election law violation? In many locals, union officer elections will occur at the beginning of the coming year. The following information is being provided as a reminder to help avoid election law violations, such as the hypothetical violation at the start of this article.

Title IV of the Labor Management Reporting and Disclosure Act of 1959, as amended (LMRDA or the Act) establishes election procedures to be followed by all unions covered by this Act, regardless of whether their constitution and bylaws so provide. The Act does not spell out detailed procedures; rather, it sets minimum requirements. Beyond this, elections are to be conducted according to the constitution and bylaws of each union, as long as the union’s rules do not conflict with the provisions of the Act.

Under Section 1209 of the Postal Reorganization Act, unions of U.S. Postal Service employees are subject to the LMRDA.

Therefore, the LMRDA administered by the United States Department of Labor must be followed concerning internal union

elections. In addition, sections of the Act contain provisions affecting the use of a labor union publication in internal union elections.

Section 401(g) of the LMRDA provides that: “No monies received by any labor organization by way of dues, assessment, or similar levy, and no monies of an employer shall be contributed or applied to promote the candidacy of any person in any election

person, union publications should afford fair and equal treatment or publicity to candidates for union office and be fair and impartial in reporting the activities of candidates.

If it chooses, a union newspaper can make equal space available to each bona fide candidate running for any particular office, as long as the candidates are notified on an equal basis of the availability of the publication

“Newsletter articles should not be used for the purpose of advancing the candidacy of an individual or individuals nor should they be used to attack a candidate or candidates.”

subject to the provisions of this title. Such monies of a labor organization may be utilized for notices, factual statements of issues not involving candidates, and other expenses necessary for holding an election.”

This means that since a union publication is funded by the union, it cannot be used for the purpose of promoting the candidacy of any individual running for union office. Also, a union website that involves the use of union resources to operate also cannot be used to promote (or attack) anyone’s candidacy. The same is true regarding the use of any union facilities and equipment. Such activity is an indirect expenditure of union funds which is prohibited under Section 401(g) of the LMRDA.

To avoid promoting the candidacy of any

for this purpose. The law is specific in this regard. A union newspaper has the choice of all candidates for a particular office – or none. Once the publication decides to open the newspaper to candidates, it must offer space to all candidates for that particular office on an equal basis.

Paid political advertising is legal provided that all candidates for a particular office or offices are given an equal opportunity to purchase space for an ad. And, provided that all candidates are charged the same consistent with space used.

Also, a union may neither attack a candidate in a union-financed publication nor urge the nomination or election of a candidate in a union-financed letter to the members.

Newsletter articles should not be used for the purpose of advancing the candidacy of an individual or individuals nor should they be used to attack a candidate or candidates. Submissions for the newsletter should be closely monitored during the election period in order to avoid conflict with the intent of the law.

That raises the question, When does the election period begin? According to the Department of Labor: “Generally, a six month period prior to an election can be considered as time when the newsletter may be construed as a campaign tool. Placement of articles, changes in format, blunt campaigning and letters from members or candidates to the editor could be considered ‘campaigning’.”

Further information concerning union elections as they pertain to union publications is available in the Member Resources section of the PPA website or by contacting the PPA.

Attend the 2017 Biennial PPA Conference!

Thursday, August 3 – Saturday, August 5
(Pre-conference session Wednesday, August 2)

**The Meadows Events & Conference Center
at Prairie Meadows Hotel, Racetrack & Casino Des Moines, Iowa**

A guestroom rate of \$129.00 per day for king or double queen occupancy will be in effect throughout the conference, in addition to three days before and three days after the actual meeting dates. Current tax rate is 12%. Prairie Meadows will provide free shuttle service from Des Moines International Airport, complimentary Internet access and no charge for parking a vehicle. To make room reservations, please visit their website, www.prairiemeadows.com using group code **08022017APW** or call **1-800-325-9015**.

Editor's toolbox: Helpful ideas for APWU communicators

Review your listening skills with this checklist

One-on-one communication is a two-way process, and the part most often neglected is listening. Following are eight poor listening habits. Are you guilty of any of them?

Editing. You hear only what you want to hear, selectively blocking out the rest of what the person is trying to communicate.

Rehearsing. As the person speaks, you are preoccupied formulating what you will say next.

Delving. Instead of listening, you focus on trying to discover a hidden message.

Daydreaming. Failing to concentrate, you allow your mind to wander which often leads to an embarrassing request for the person to repeat what he or she just said.

Personalizing. You relate what is being said to your own experience and allow your thoughts to go off on a tangent. What the person is saying becomes about you, not the speaker.

Switching. You are too quick to change the subject, sending the message that you are not interested in what the other person has to say.

Arguing. You are quick to disparage or ridicule what was just said. You are more interested in verbal sparring than communicating.

Agreeing. You nod and mumble agreement to everything that is said, just to avoid conflict.

Tips for proofreading

If you're proofreading publications, you might want to:

- Reread all headlines and subheads.
- Reread all sentences following headlines and font changes.
- Cross-check the table of contents against the text.
- Proof corrections and also the area surrounding corrections.
- Check pages where stories are continued to be sure the story "restarted" at the right place.

How to prune your prose

Here are some ways to tighten your writing:

- **Look for** sentences that begin with "There is or There are."

Wordy: "There are five people who are working on the project." (ten words)

Tighter: "Five people are working on that project." (seven words)

- **Avoid using** "in the process of."

Wordy: "He is in the process of adding names to the committee." (eleven words)

Tighter: "He is adding names to the committee." (seven words)

Color tips

Don't overlook the effect of color in your printed pieces. Color can add both interest and appeal. It reduces errors and increases motivation. In fact, studies show that people are 35 percent more likely to be interested in a piece with color than one without it. Just adding one color to your piece can give it a new dimension. Some tips include:

- Use color to direct the reader's eye or make an element stand out.
- Use color for contrast – and stay away from using color-on-color designs.
- Color printed on a smooth, glossy surface appears purer and more brilliant than the same ink on a rough surface.
- Full-color photos will capture a reader's attention immediately.

Top tips from Mark Twain

Mark Twain helped to shape the American language. Here are some quotes worth noting from this great writer:

- On style (to a 12-year-old boy): "I notice that you use plain, simple language, short words and brief sentences. That is the way to write English – it is the modern way and the best way. Stick to it and don't let fluff and flowers and verbosity creep in."
- On using short words: "I never write 'metropolis' for 7 cents when I can get the same for 'city'."
- On being concise: "With a hundred words to do it with, the literary artisan could catch that airy thought and tie it down and reduce it to a . . . cabbage but the artist does it with 20 – and the result is a flower."
- On word choice: "The difference be-

tween the almost-right word and the right word is really a large matter – 'tis the difference between the lightning bug and the lightning."

Write clearer, more readable paragraphs

Paragraphs should make reading easy. Put the topic sentence first; follow with supporting material, held together with conjunctions; and finish with a summary.

Here are some tips:

Think of paragraphs as units of thought. Give each main idea its own paragraph.

Keep paragraphs fairly short. The breaks between paragraphs are stopping points for readers; don't stretch their patience by making paragraphs more than 4-5 sentences long.

Vary paragraph length. This will help maintain your readers' attention. Use single-sentence paragraphs sparingly to emphasize important ideas.

Can't solve the problem?

If you've tried everything else to solve a problem, try standing. Researchers at the University of California say you can improve your chances of solving the problem by 20 percent if you're standing instead of sitting.

Reason: Standing boosts your heart rate by about 10 beats a minute. And the increase in blood flow stimulates your brain.

Performance quiz

Is your publication doing its job? Nine basic questions to ask yourself:

1. Who are my readers?
2. Are they getting the publication regularly and on schedule?
3. Why do they want to read my publication?
4. What do I want to tell them?
5. What does my organization want me to tell them?
6. What do they want to read?
7. Is my message unique? Is it unavailable from any other source?
8. Am I delivering what I promise?
9. Do my graphics, art and layout suit editorial content, publication purpose and reader expectations?

Return Service Requested

Christmas in July?

By Mike Mazurkiewicz,
 APWU retiree, St Paul, MN

It's winter – why talk about Christmas in July? I originally wrote and distributed this article last summer since many local and state newsletters do not publish in December. It provides an opportunity to review a little history of Christmas cards, Postal Service connections to “*Christmas in July*” celebrations, and to display some creative uses of cancelled Christmas stamps.

The tradition of sending Christmas cards originated in the US around 1940 and proliferated with industrialization. As more people moved away from farms sending cards allowed them to stay in touch with family and friends. Card art and illustrations gained much prominence and in the 1940’s newly released Christmas cards were critically reviewed by major newspapers. Today many people produce their own personalized cards. The tradition of sending cards hasn’t died with land-line telephones as expected. Last year over 1.6 billion cards were mailed thru the USPS.

In 1942, the Calvary Baptist Church in Washington, D.C. celebrated “*Christmas in July*” with carols and the sermon “*Christmas Presents in July*.” They repeated it in 1943, with a Christmas tree covered with donations. The congregation would present



Christmas gifts early to give ample time for their distribution to missions worldwide. It became an annual event.

The U.S. Post Office and U.S. Army and Navy officials, in conjunction with the American advertising and greeting card industries, threw a “*Christmas in July*” luncheon in New York in 1944 to promote an early Christmas mailing campaign for service men and women overseas during World War II. The luncheon was repeated in 1945. American advertisers began using Christmas

in July themes in print for summertime sales as early as 1950. Today, it is more often used as a marketing tool or an excuse to have a party. Television stations may choose to rerun Christmas specials, and many stores have “*Christmas in July*” sales. Some towns, like nearby Lindstrom, MN, have major city-wide celebrations. The above cards from a card shop in Lindstrom display a creative re-use of cancelled Christmas stamps.

Have a great holiday season. Enjoy your union negotiated benefits . . . and Happy Holidays!