

# Postal Newsletter

## Press

AMERICAN POSTAL WORKERS UNION

NATIONAL POSTAL PRESS ASSOCIATION

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May-June, 2013

## Members: lifeblood of the union

by Tony Carobine, President

One of the biggest challenges facing unions today is maintaining a loyal membership.

A common denominator in maintaining a loyal membership is communication. However, communication involves a lot more than passing down information from union officials to members. Psychologists that study groups who work together over a long period say that in order to keep people motivated and interested they must be included. This means they must be made part of what's going on, be included in the group, and not be made to feel like an outsider.

As union communicators we should take into account our audience, in other words our readership when preparing our publications by keeping the following points in mind:

Is the paper published on a regular basis so members are aware that the union is always working to protect their interests?

Does the publication include labor or postal union history information?

Are longtime members periodically interviewed for a newsletter article about how pay and conditions were in the post office many years ago as compared to today because of the union?

Does the local recognize membership loyalty by honoring members in various ways for achieving union membership milestones; such as: listing their names and/or printing their photos in the paper for 5, 10, 15, 20, etc. years of union membership?

Does the publication use every opportunity to include the membership in the paper; such as a "Members Speak Out" column whereby randomly selected members are asked their opinion on various issues?

Do stories in the paper about grievance settlements include direct quotes from members affected by the union's efforts?

Are members recognized in the union publication for their volunteer efforts in the community?

Does the publication use every opportunity to include photographs of members participating in various union activities?

Given the appropriate content, a union paper will be read. Why? Based on research, union publications that employ what is called "member-oriented" labor journalism enjoy an extremely high readership.

Member-oriented labor journalism involves using the suggestions cited above, which is simply including the rank and file members in the publication. In other words, telling the union's story through the experiences of its members. By including the membership in the paper, by making it the "member's publication," two things will happen. Readership will increase and members will be more likely to see the union as

their organization and as a result are more inclined to be supportive.

Remember, 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 to read and the union is less likely to be perceived as an institution or a clique being run by a few. The idea is to develop the paper into a forum for an exchange of ideas and a place to share the experiences of members not only at work, but in other aspects of their lives as well.

The reasons for publishing a union newsletter extend beyond the need to inform the membership about the business of the union. As communicators we must remember that members are the lifeblood of the union and the union's strength depends on the loyalty of its members. Adopting a style of membership inclusion and education in our publications is a step towards maintaining a loyal membership.

### Nichols to attend PPA conference



John Nichols

Political reporter, writer and commentator John Nichols will speak during the opening session of the PPA conference on Thursday, August 22.

Nichols writes about politics for *The Nation* magazine as its Washington correspondent. He is a contributing writer for *The Progressive* and *In These Times* and the associate editor of the *Capital Times*, the daily newspaper in Madison, Wisconsin. His articles have appeared in the *New York Times*, *Chicago Tribune* and dozens of other newspapers.

Nichols is a regular guest on radio and television

*Continued on page 2*

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**Statement of purpose:** Published by the American Postal Workers Union National Postal Press Association, the *PPA Newsletter* is an educational tool designed to assist PPA members with the performance of their duties as communicators and to help promote the goals and objectives of the APWU.

**This publication is 100% union printer produced:**

**Union typeset, Union layout, Union printed.**



# Education of editors should be top priority

by Edward J. Brennan,  
Secretary- Treasurer

In August, the American Postal Workers Union National Postal Press Association will hold its biennial conference in Madison, Wisconsin. This event will bring together many APWU communicators from around the country who have varying levels of experience with publishing union newsletters; from the seasoned editor to the new editor. However, some of our editors will remain at home for one reason or another and our entire union could suffer great harm because of it.

Our editors are a major link in the educational chain of our union. They are the lifeline between the union leadership and the rank and file members. They are the guardians of the written word. They are the protectors of good journalism and fair and honest reporting. They are the voice of local and state organizations. They are the voice of the members whom they represent. They are the protectors of proper grammar, freedom of the press and the legalities of journalism which relate to postal union publications. They should be the trained editors which our union needs so badly during these trying times.

Every local or state organization should find some way to finance the education of their editor through the Postal Press Association. Budgets should be set up which address the subject of editor training. Constitutions should include language that

provides for the editor to attend the Postal Press Association Conference in order to be properly trained for the job of editing the local or state publication which has been placed in his/her hands. Editor training should be a top priority for every local or state organization that has a publication for its members.

As editors we should take pride in our positions and have the desire to put forth our best efforts in performing the duties of editing. We should learn the necessity of obtaining instruction in both the fundamental mechanics of editing a newsletter and also the legal aspects of those things which go into that publication. We must relate the need for this knowledge to our members and our leaders so that they will all understand the necessity of being trained in this important position.

The PPA conference is just like money in the bank for our union. Everything we need to know to become more knowledgeable editors is there for the taking. All we have to do is be there and be a part of the conference. It is an insurance policy for our local, state, and national union in that the knowledge gained by our editors at the conference could insure the education of our membership. It could insure the addition of members. It could rally our members around our national union. It could insure us from lawsuits or election violations. Do we have adequate coverage? Plan to attend the PPA conference. Protect yourselves!

## Nichols to attend PPA conference

*Continued from page 1*

programs as a commentator on politics and media issues, including the Ed Schultz radio and television programs, Thom Hartmann, Chris Hayes, among others.

With Robert McChesney, Nichols has co-authored the books *Our Media, Not Theirs; Tragedy and Farce: How the American Media Sell Wars, Spin Elections, and Destroy Democracy; The Death and Life of American Journalism* and, most recently, *Uprising: How Wisconsin Renewed the Politics of Protest, from Madison to Wall Street*. McChesney and Nichols are the co-founders of **Free Press**, the nation's media-reform net-

work, which organized the 2003 and 2005 National Conferences on Media Reform.

Nichols has been a featured presenter at conventions, conferences and public forums on media issues sponsored by the Federal Communications Commission, the Congressional Progressive Caucus, Consumers International, the Future of Music Coalition, the AFL-CIO, The Rainbow/PUSH Coalition, The Newspaper Guild (CWA) and dozens of other organizations.

An advocate for postal workers, Nichols has recently authored articles in support of postal reform legislation and maintaining a strong and innovative postal service.

# Don't give up your newsletter

by Jenny Gust, Editor-at-Large

In these uncertain times for the postal service, it is more important than ever to communicate with all of our members. But what is the best way to do that? How can you reach each member and give them the information they need? Union meetings, unfortunately, are not the answer because people don't attend them. People are busy and the schedule of meetings doesn't always fit in for them.

You could put notices up on the boards around your workroom area but people won't necessarily see them or might pull them down to read and then throw them away or take them home. Locals many times have stations, branches and area offices that need to hear the news. How do you reach all of your membership? Well let's see, we work for the postal service and they deliver the mail – come on, it's a real no brainer! **The best way to get to your members is to publish a paper.**

It doesn't have to be a full color magazine with slick paper. It can be as simple as one or two sheets of paper, folded and

mailed to your members. It doesn't have to cost an arm and a leg either. There are many options for putting out a newsletter – just check out what your fellow PPA members are sending out to their members. If you need to save money due to a

decreasing treasury there are many ways to cut your costs. **But to stop informing and educating your members is foolish.** They pay their dues and they have a right to know what is going on.

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***“How do you reach all of your membership? Well let's see, we work for the postal service and they deliver the mail – come on, it's a real no brainer! The best way to get to your members is to publish a paper!”***

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A newsletter gives your local (or state) an identity. It shows people they are part of a group of like-minded people. It reminds them we are all in this together. When they know more about the organization they are more likely to par-

participate in activities. They also feel their money is being spent for something they can see. If your officers are ready to get rid of the paper remind them how important it is to get their name out. People support people they know and trust. It is

free advertising every time you put the paper out.

If you need more ideas on how to cut costs or change up your publication, make plans to attend the next PPA Conference. It will be held in Madison, Wisconsin on August 22-24. If you can't attend the conference, give PPA President Tony Carobine a call. He is always willing to help out editors and has plenty of ideas so you can keep your newsletter going.

# Writing is like building a house

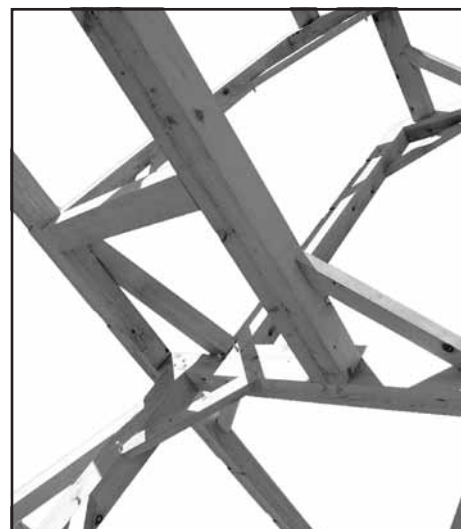
by Frank Antinone, Editor-at-Large

Putting together a union publication can be compared to building a house. A builder needs to know what is to be built and who will be living there. A writer must have a clear purpose and an intended audience.

A builder who specializes in building houses probably would not have the tools or experience necessary to build a high rise, and might even consider some of the tools necessary to complete such a task unnecessary and time wasting.

An editor or writer must first consider what is to be written. Is it an article for the union publication, an editorial for the local newspaper concerning problems with the USPS or writing a book? Whatever the writer's purpose, keep to the basics; **having a reasonable knowledge of English grammar, vocabulary, expression and imagination.** We are all taught the “basic tool kit” in school and from general reading.

As adults, we refresh our memories by consulting other union publications, sev-



eral Internet articles or the dictionary and thesaurus. These basics serve well for “no-frill” writing.

Non-fiction writers add to the basics by reading widely in their area of expertise and specialization. Fiction writers increase the ideas of their mind and find their own voices by reading fiction and non-fiction in many genres and from different authors and writers from different time periods.

All writers operate from the same basic tool kit, and like builders, have the option of using the tools that suit the project that is being worked on. They may not need every gadget in the box, and they may use some of the tools in a different way.

Screwdrivers and putty knives can be used for tasks other than the ones they're designed for, while older tools like magnetic stud finders may have been replaced by electronic ones, but they can still do the job.

The editor of a union publication, like any craftsman, must think carefully and decide about which tool is needed for their publication.

# Make your plans now to atten

On August 22-24, APWU editors, associate editors and officers will meet in Madison, Wisconsin for the 2013 Biennial Conference of the APWU National Postal Press Association. Preceding the conference will be a full day of workshops on Wednesday, August 21. Established in 1967, this event is part of the PPA's mission; helping communicators fulfill their responsibilities of informing and energizing the membership of our great union.

Led by a group of talented instructors, the intensive four-day program will cover a variety of communication-related topics and will be helpful to everyone; from novice to experienced. In addition to ten workshops, the gathering will include three general sessions and an awards banquet.

Faced with a variety of issues affecting our livelihood, these are indeed trying times for postal workers. As a means to confront these challenges, it is especially important to have an active, supportive and united membership. In this regard, we should consider the value of maintaining a presence with our members and in our communities by the regular use of effective communication mediums; such as newsletters, social media and other public forums.

## Friday Night at the Movies

Networking is an important part of every conference. For conference attendees who like to continue stimulating discussion into the evening hours this event is for you. At this session you will be invited to pull up a chair, grab a snack and watch the film *As Goes Janesville*, a documentary about how a town tries to reinvent itself amid the loss of their century-old GM plant and Wisconsin's civil war over unions. The film will be followed by a discussion about the movie's subject matter.

The PPA Conference is an opportunity to learn more about communicating – a valuable activity that can influence not only the membership but also everyone the union needs to reach in order to promote and protect the interest of union members and their families.

The conference will be held at The Madison Concourse Hotel in Madison, Wisconsin. The room rate is \$127 per night, single or double occupancy. This rate is valid throughout the conference, in addition to three days before and three days after the actual meeting dates. Current tax rate is 14.5%. For more information about The Madison Concourse Hotel or to make room reservations, please visit the PPA website, [www.apwupostalpress.org](http://www.apwupostalpress.org) or call hotel reservations at 1-800-356-8293.

For the sixth consecutive conference the registration fee is set at \$160. This fee includes conference materials, workshops, refreshment breaks, buffet dinner reception, and awards banquet.

PPA conference attendees are also welcome and encouraged to attend the John Akey Seminar which will be held immediately following the PPA conference on Sunday and Monday, August 25-26. This biennial seminar named after the late John Akey, who served as a clerk craft national business agent, Wisconsin state president and president of the Wausau Area Local, will include a variety of workshops pertaining to clerk, maintenance, and motor vehicle issues. PPA members interested in attending the John Akey Seminar should contact APWU of Wisconsin President Steve Lord at PO Box 2371, Oshkosh, WI 54903 or email [lordsa@charter.net](mailto:lordsa@charter.net).

Included in the PPA Conference educational program are the following sessions:

### Pre-conference session Wednesday, August 21

#### (A) Administration of Union Publications & Resources

Publishing a union paper requires more than preparing the content and printing the finished product. This workshop will examine various responsibilities associated with the administration of a union publication and

other union resources. What are the requirements for including election notices in a publication? Is it appropriate for an individual to use the union's logo? Must income generated from advertising be reported? What is the best way to maintain an up-to-date mailing list? These and several other topics will be explored in this interactive session.

#### (B) Photojournalism, Creating Irresistible Photos

Even more compelling than the adage, "People like to read about people, themselves first and others second" is the fact that people like to look at people and other visual images. The focus of this gathering will be the benefits of including the membership and activities of the union in your publication and website through the art of photojournalism. Also discussed will be the ethics of editing photographs with computer programs.

#### (C) APWU – A Historical Perspective; Organizing the Nonmember

How did the American Postal Workers Union come into existence? What was achieved because of the postal strike of 1970? The first segment of this workshop will address these questions and many more interesting events involving the history of the American Postal Workers Union and its predecessor unions. Nonmembers affect the strength of our union at all levels. The second part of this workshop will examine various communication methods and reference material to use when attempting to organize nonmembers.

### Conference Workshops Thursday, August 22 – Saturday, August 24

#### (D) Mail processing consolidations: Developing a Strategy for Getting Your Message Out (Thursday only)

This session will examine the importance of developing a working relationship with the mainstream media and strategies for influ-

encing mail closing technical plan efforts coverage early ac

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#### (F) I A Ca

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#### (G) I Who

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# and the August PPA Conference

g public support as a means to confront processing consolidations and other gs. Presented will be communication ques for developing and executing a hat will boost your media relations ef- and give your local or state union the age and public support it needs to prop- address these important issues.

## Re-designing Your Publication

your newsletter in-tune with the or is it a relic? This workshop will ou modernize your paper, transform- into a powerful instrument that com- s attention. Learn design techniques will capture the reader’s interest in st few seconds; improve six key el- s of your newsletter: format, name- masthead, page layout, type choices, aper selection; discover ways to use s, headlines, outquotes, borders, rules ther elements for maximum impact. *esigning Your Publication* will pro- you with the specific “how-to’s” for illing your newsletter to a new level ility and effectiveness. (Note: Partici- should bring a copy of their publica- to this workshop.)

## Illustrate Like a Pro: Cartoon Collage Workshop

addition to the written word, cartoons i important communications tool and er way to deliver a message. Join onists Huck and Konopacki in this ctive, hands-on session and explore ep dark secrets of political cartoon- You will brainstorm ideas relevant to workplace and learn how to use read- available material to transform those into cartoon collages that demand ion. Learn to think like a cartoonist ut having to draw like one.

## Legal Issues: Pays for What I Say?

no does a union publication belong o libel and copyright laws affect your om of speech and freedom of the What are the benefits of establishing torial policy? How do union election

laws apply to union publications and web- sites? *Legal Issues: Who Pays for What I Say?* will address these questions and oth- ers with a presentation on the issues of editorial policies, responsible journalism, libel, copyright and union elections.

## (H) Using Social Media Effectively

This session will teach you the do’s and don’ts of social media for union communica- tion. Discussed will be developing an overall strategy and why social media should be a part of your plan. Also covered, the best prac- tices when using Facebook and Twitter, and how to integrate social media content with printed newsletters and other communication resources. No experience required, only a de- sire to learn about how to connect with your online members. Bringing your computer to this workshop is encouraged!

## (I) Labor Journalists – Linking the Past to the Present

Exploring the relevance of labor his- tory to today’s labor movement is the focus of this workshop. By examining how our predecessors built and maintained effective unions, we can learn what strategies and tactics might be currently useful. As the labor movement increasingly becomes com- prised of a new generation of members, it’s important to pass on the lessons that the founders of our unions learned so well themselves. This session will help com- municators educate their readers about the purpose of unions, inspire them to increase their involvement and encourage them to face up to the issues of today.

## (J) Writing and Editing for the Union Communicator (Friday & Saturday)

At this valuable hands-on session, you will learn the elements of writing and edit- ing. You will be taken through a host of exercises to help you write inspiring edito- rials, powerful news stories, attention-get- ting features, headlines that scream “Read Me” and more. This workshop is a must for anyone that communicates with the mem- bership through the written word.

## Registration Form 2013 PPA Conference

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Title: \_\_\_\_\_

Publication: \_\_\_\_\_

Local or State organization: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_

State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Registration Fee: (PPA Members): \$160.00

After July 21: \$200.00

Non-PPA Members: \$225.00

The registration fee includes workshops, dinner, refresh- ment breaks, and Awards Banquet. (Note: The registration fee is all-inclusive and must be paid in full prior to the close of registration.)

## Pre-conference Session Wednesday, August 21

Please select from the three half-day workshops (A-C). Walk-ins are not permitted.

\_\_\_\_ (A) \_\_\_\_ (B) \_\_\_\_ (C)

## Conference Workshops Thursday, August 22 – Saturday, August 24

You must register for these workshops in advance by se- lecting four of the workshops and your alternative choices by using the letter next to the workshop description (D-J). Assignments will be made on a first-registered-first-served basis. Class size is limited. Walk-ins are not permitted.

\_\_\_\_ First Choice \_\_\_\_ Second Choice \_\_\_\_ Third Choice

\_\_\_\_ Fourth Choice \_\_\_\_ Alternative Choice 1

\_\_\_\_ Alternative Choice 2

Please make your check payable to APWU National Postal Press Association and mail it along with this registration form to:

APWU National Postal Press Association  
PO Box 888  
Iron Mountain MI 49801

# 2013 APWU National Election

## APWU Election Committee adopts rules

Following are rules adopted by the 2013 APWU Election Committee pertaining to union publications in accordance with Section 401(g) of the Labor Management Reporting & Disclosure Act of 1959 (LMRDA) as Amended which states: "No moneys received by any labor organization by way of dues, assessment or similar levy, and no moneys of an employer shall be contributed or applied to promote the candidacy of any person in any election subject to the provisions of this title. Such moneys of a labor organization may be utilized for notices, factual statements of issues not involving candidates, and other expenses necessary for the holding of an election."

Section 401(g) of the LMRDA prohibits the use of union or employer funds to promote the candidacy of any person in an APWU National Election. The following rules, while not all encompassing, are offered in an attempt to preclude the most common types of violations involving union publications.

- Local/state union publications prepared, printed, and distributed at union expense may not be used to promote or attack the candidacy of any member in the election. Publications include newspapers, magazines, websites, letters or other similar type of communications.

- The inclusion of candidates' campaign statements, press releases, photographs or announcements in a union publication is prohibited unless all candidates for the same office are specifically advised and offered a substantially equal opportunity.

- Articles which are used to praise or criticize a candidate are prohibited. With regard to the printing of photographs of candidates (other than those covered in the previous item) local/state publications should only contain such photographs when they are directly related to a timely news event being reported. Local/state officers who have their own columns in union publications cannot use their columns to promote or oppose an individual's candidacy.

- A local/state union publication has the right to accept paid political advertising

from candidates for specific offices or all offices. If it is decided to accept paid political advertising, the local/state affiliate must provide a notice and rates to all candidates for the office(s) in which the local/state affiliate has decided to accept advertising. The advertisement must contain a statement that it is paid for by the candidate.

- Local/State union publications may print, without comment, membership endorsements, provided such endorsements of candidates are voted on at a regular membership meeting. Publications with endorsements cannot be disseminated beyond the normal mailing list utilized by the local/state affiliate.

- APWU national, state, or local union property and resources, including but not limited to, union offices, computers, websites, telephones, automobiles, supplies, and printing and reproduction equipment may not be used for campaigning. Union property cannot be used for posting, storage, or distribution of campaign literature, for campaign meetings or campaign press conferences. Union funds may not be used to rent property or meeting rooms for such activities. No union logo or stationery may be used in campaigning for or against a candidate. This includes using any union logo for campaign-related purposes, including press conferences.

## Member comments about PPA conferences

*"...The conference was the most rewarding experience I've ever had in my 20 plus years as a union member. I want to thank you, your staff and all the teachers, editors and members who provided a wealth of learning. I hope to apply what I learned to make our newsletter an award winner at the next conference."*

\* \* \*

*"...I just wanted to say thank you for such a wonderful experience as the PPA conference. ...I can think of no other words than: "It was great!" I made many new friends and got so many helpful ideas, that it is hard to know where to begin."*

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*"...I was most impressed with the professionalism of the instructors, their knowledge and ability to teach the varied and critical subject matter to not only the new or beginning editors, but to some of us "old timers" who have been around for a long time."*

\* \* \*

*"...I would like to commend you and your staff for an outstanding conference. It was my first time attending such an event and I really enjoyed it. I know such an event takes a lot of time to plan and organize. The conference was well organized and the classes were very educational. Keep up the good work!"*

\* \* \*

*"I have just returned from the APWU National Postal Press Association (PPA) conference, where editors from all over the country gather every two years to attend training in the field of producing a quality newspaper. It is the best training in the field of union journalism anywhere; the PPA is the class act of the APWU. ..."*

# Editor's toolbox: Helpful ideas for APWU communicators

## A design and typography quiz

Rate your design and typography knowledge by saying either true or false to these statements:

1. When you design the page of a publication, all you have to remember is that people read from left to right.
2. The best order for a story, its headline and a related photo is to put the headline above the photo and the story under the photo.
3. It's all right to use either sans serif type (like the headline type in this newsletter) or serif type (like the type in this article) for headlines.
4. Not indenting paragraphs in columns of text affects reading speed.
5. You should never put a photo below the text in an ad.

Answers: 1. False. You must also remember that they read from top to bottom. 2. False. The best order is photo, headline, story. 3. True. But most experts agree that sans serif is easier to read in larger sizes. 4. True. Text without indents slows reading speed. 5. True. Readers will tend to look at the photo and then turn the page without looking at your message.

## When editing your own copy

Whenever you write something, you should know how to edit and polish your own copy. Here are some guidelines to follow when editing for:

- **Brevity.** Cut every word that adds nothing to meaning. *Example:* Change "during the course of" to "during" and "few in number" to "few."
- **Clarity.** Don't use vague adjectives when specific ones are called for. Don't write "We received *numerous* inquiries." Instead write, "We received 14 inquiries."
- **Tone and style.** Make sure your words sound as if they come from a human being and not an institution. *Example:* Instead of writing "Further notification will follow," write "I'll keep you informed."
- **Variety.** Avoid starting each sentence with the same part of speech, such as a

noun or pronoun. *Caution:* Don't try to start each sentence with a different part of speech. Just strive for some variety.

- **Content.** Make your purpose immediately clear. Don't force your reader to wade through several paragraphs before understanding why you wrote the piece.
- **Paragraph strength.** See to it that each paragraph deals with only one topic.

Including too many will make your reader work too hard.

**To make written materials easier to scan,** steer clear of these common mistakes. Don't use all capital letters; that slows readers by more than 13%. And don't use reverse type on a dark background; that decreases reading speed by 11%.

## Ellis named awards judge

Shawn Ellis will serve as the outside (final) judge for the 2013 PPA Awards Program. He will be responsible for selecting the recipients of this year's awards from among the top eight entries in each of the 15 award categories as determined by the PPA Awards Committee. He will also judge all entries for the website awards.

Ellis has been a Teamsters Local 372 member since 1986 when he was hired as a home delivery manager for the *Detroit Free Press*.

Ellis and other dedicated and committed union members in six unions became embroiled in a bitter labor dispute in 1995 when Gannett, Co. and Knight Ridder, Inc. began an attack on its workforce of nearly 2,500 workers at the Detroit Newspaper Agency, *Detroit Free Press*, and *The Detroit News*.

During the 17-month strike and subsequent 55-month lockout that ended in mid-2001, Ellis served in a number of volunteer assignments including co-coordinator of media relations and extensive volunteer at *The Detroit Sunday Journal* during its four-year production run. During the dis-

pute, Ellis was fired twice by Gannett, Inc. for legally protected strike activity, with both firings overturned by the National Labor Relations Board.

Later during the lockout, Brother Ellis also worked for the Metropolitan Detroit AFL-CIO where he served as the organization's Community Services and Communications Director for nearly eight years. Ellis produced a weekly radio program, monthly labor newspaper, and helped other union members in need with accessing services from local United Way funded agencies.

In 2005, Ellis was asked to serve the International Brotherhood of Teamsters in the role of Central Region Training Coordinator where he has the responsibility of coordinating and facilitating Central Region courses on organizing, negotiations, arbitration, political action, and steward development. Ellis also coordinates annual national trainings on media relations, newsletter and website design, and editorial and photo content development.

Ellis serves on a number of national and regional boards including Labor's International Hall of Fame and Michigan Labor Press.



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# Writing: consider your audience

Always remember when writing on any topic that your goal is to make it easy and enjoyable for your readers to understand. To do that you must put yourself in their position. What are they interested in? What do they want to learn more about? What knowledge do they already have? Your first sentences must catch their attention and tell them what reading this story or article will do for them.

The words used in the story and the logical sequence of thoughts have a lot to do with how easy it is to understand. In school, we may have been taught to use long or complex words, technical explanations, and extensive footnotes when writing essays. In organizational communication it is almost the opposite. We must know all

about the topic. Then our task is to pick out the most important facts and present them in simplest possible terms.

- Start with an outline.

What do you want to say? What order makes the most sense?

- Write as you speak.

Be as simple and direct as you would in conversation. Never use a long word when a short one will do. Don't worry about repeating a word if it is the only right word.

- Keep sentences short.

Try an average of 15 to 20 words per sentence.

Studies have shown that ease of understanding is related both to sentence length and word length.

- Stick to the subject.

If you find you are wandering, go back

and rewrite. Sometimes the order can be improved. Occasionally you may find your final paragraph should be your lead.

- Weed out unnecessary words. Don't use several when one word will do.

- Write in the active voice.

It is more effective to write, "A work accident injured two members," than "two members were injured in a work accident."

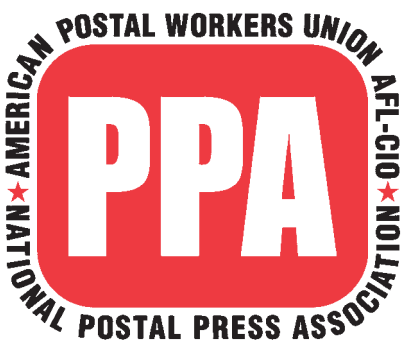
Avoid the passive form. Try writing a story without using any forms of the verb "to be." It's hard work and forces you to identify the sources of the actions. When you write this way, you can see how active verbs propel the movement of the story.

- Use direct quotes.

They provide color, pace, and emphasis.

- Above all, respect your readers. They are an intelligent group.

*A proud tradition  
of service!*



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## Building a 'do-it-now' mentality . . . how to swallow the big frog first

Teaching yourself to enjoy delayed gratification is a philosophy that can help you face up to difficult, unpleasant tasks and get them done first. Mark Twain said it: "If you have to swallow two frogs, swallow the big one first, and don't look at it too long."

Begin your day, your week, by tackling the toughest task first. It will make everything that follows seem easier and

boost your self-confidence.

Some people take an almost perverse pride in being able to deal with the ugliest, meanest, most difficult things first. Most of us can improve our ability to handle the difficult head-on.

Remember, the real enemy is procrastination – which often is compounded by the time consumed in dwelling on unfinished work and unsolved problems.