



# ***THE SPRINGFIELD RIFLE***

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Welcome to the Springfield Massachusetts Area Local 497 of the American Postal Workers Union. We represent approximately 760 employees in the western Massachusetts area. Our membership is comprised of a diverse workforce consisting of the Clerk, Maintenance, Vehicle Services and Support Services Crafts. We work in facilities ranging from a very large processing plant located in Springfield to small area offices located in individual towns. Our Members process mail, repair equipment related to postal operations, and transport mail to and from postal facilities from Western Mass. to New Jersey. Inside is a glimpse of some of our members doing what we do best!

Efforts and courage  
are not enough  
without purpose and  
direction.

John F. Kennedy

EVERYDAYPOWER



## Union Hitchhiker

Have you ever driven down the road and run upon a hitchhiker? Most of the time, their thumb is giving a clear message:

“If you furnish the car, the gas, the time and do the driving I’ll ride with you. But if you think I’m going to pitch in for gas, you’re out of your mind. By the way, if you have an accident and I’m hurt, I’ll sue you for all you got.”

We have hitchhikers in our Union. In one way or another they’re saying:

“If you supply the protection of a contract, protect me at work, get me fair and decent wages, health benefits, and hours of work, I’ll ride. But you’re crazy if you think I’m going to get involved and help you make this a better place to work. And by the way, if anything happens that irritates me, you’ll hear from me!”

Think about it-Are you just thumbing a free ride? Or can you do a little more to help out?

# President

The elections are over and at the union meeting on June 21<sup>st</sup> all of the officers of this local were sworn in. Northeast Regional Coordinator John Dirzius took time out of his busy schedule to perform the ceremony. John gave a very inspirational and motivational speech that was well received by everyone in attendance. Also speaking on this night were Joe LaCapria Northeast Regional Director for MVS, and Dave Sarnacki Northeast Regional Director for maintenance. Both updated us with the current events in each craft. Thanks to you guys for coming out and speaking. We had a great turnout for this union meeting I would like to see more meetings with this type of turnout. Union meetings are for all union members to attend. They are held on the third Thursday of each month at 6:30 PM at the union office on 1124 Berkshire Ave. There are no meetings in July, August, and December. Meetings generally last about an hour and a half, afterwards you can come to O'Brien's Tavern and have a free drink and Pizza while socializing with your union brothers and sisters. I am encouraging all APWU members to stop by a union meeting to see what they are all about. Be part of your union. National contract negotiations have begun. Now more than ever we must stand together unified as one in solidarity. It's time to show management how strong we can be by wearing your union gear on Thursdays. We need your help in this fight. We need our members to get involved. Help us help you by getting involved. We need stewards on all tours. Volunteer and become actively involved with your union. We will train you to become a steward. We had a stewards training seminar for all stewards in June. NBA Steve Lukosus, NBA Frank Rigiero, and NBA Dave Sarnacki came to the local to do an intermediate training seminar for all our stewards. This seminar was scheduled to help all stewards better understand the daily demands and issues that a steward incurs on a daily basis. By having this training, it will help to better represent you the membership. In closing I would like to say, ask not what the union can do for you, but what you can do for your union. Get involved. Help us help you, we need more union activists.

In Solidarity,

Russ Evans President



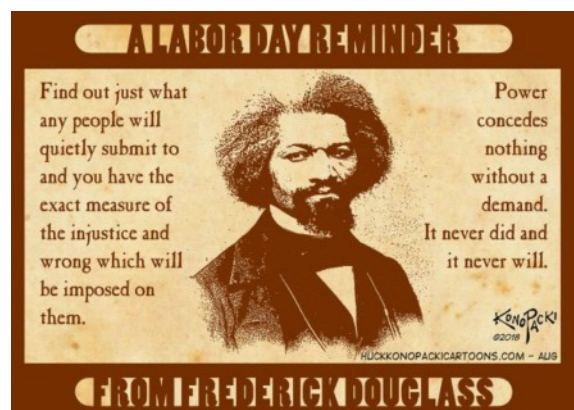
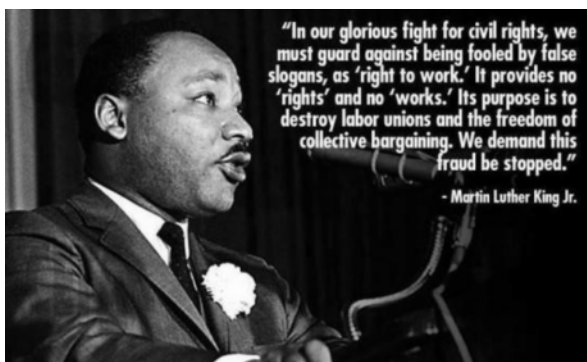
## Vice President

Hello Brothers and Sisters of Local 497

My Name is Hector Torres and I am the Executive Vice President of our Local. The position of Vice President is a very important position. The Vice President is the second highest ranking officer in our local. In addition, I am the lead scheduling advocate for the local when it comes to our arbitration cases. As Vice President, I am also a member of the Labor-Management and Negotiation Committee which is important because whenever a new National Contract is signed Management and The Union have the ability to open up local negotiations and try to renegotiate our Local Memorandums of Understanding. This goes for both the Springfield Plant as well as all of the Post Offices we represent. My goal during this term is to try and continue to educate the membership on our contractual language as well as find different ways of trying and bring us all together, either through another membership drive like we did in January when we handed out t shirts to all of our great dues paying members both at the Springfield plant as well as all the other post offices in our local. Myself, Local President Russ Evans, Clerk Craft Director Jim Long and Maintenance Craft Director Rich Peabody were able to meet a lot of our brothers and sisters during our trip to Pittsfield and many of the surrounding offices out in the Berkshires answering your questions and dealing with issues while we were there. It was a great time meeting all of the different members of our local!

I would also like to take this opportunity to have a discussion with all of you regarding Postal Surveys. The USPS has started another survey and according to them it is better than those in the past. Don't believe it. It is the same old survey with a different name attached to it. Once you have been burned, then you never look at fire the same way again. If you have forgotten, the United States Postal Service used the Voice of the Employee survey against the APWU during contract negotiations some time ago. Apparently, some employees were stating on the survey that we made a very good wage and that they were happy with that wage. Unfortunately, Postal Management took this information into National Contract Negotiations and used it against the American Postal Workers Union. This local has done drawings in the past to help draw attention as to why filling out the survey is not in the best interest to the bargaining unit. The service will now be sending out these surveys every 3 months. The local is requesting that our members do nothing to harm themselves during our National Contract negotiations which began in June of 2018. Remember that it's your job and or your future wages you may be surveying. In closing I would like to thank you all for being a part of our family because as I have said in the past there is no union without you...

In solidarity  
Hector Torres



# Clerk Craft Director

Dear Brothers and Sisters, I am writing to you today to bring up a few issues that will help both your Union and You in the future. Let me begin by saying that your Union has posted numerous times for Stewards and or any other positions within our Local with very little response. We need more involvement by our membership to make us stronger as a whole. We would like younger members to come in and be more involved. As you are well aware of, we are an aging facility. Many of us will be gone in the next few years. We need your help in trying to keep what we have earned for the next generation of Union members. We are looking for Stewards, I know that it's not a job for everyone. I also know that it's easier to complain about not getting one, or not liking your Steward or bad mouthing the Union than it is to stand up and be one. Let's face it, it's a thankless job. Most times Stewards are disliked by both the membership and management. Some days you just can't win. Yet your Stewards still continue to try and represent you to the best of their abilities. I can tell you that it's sometimes rewarding and sometimes the worst days of your lives. You just have to try and remember as a Steward you are fighting for the rights of all. This is where your Union needs you to step up and continue the fight. The second and last issue I would like to bring up is the filing of grievances. Everyday I'm sure that you see a violation on the workroom floor. I think that now in most instances that the membership just ignores it or they think that someone else will file the grievance. Step up and be that someone that files. If you are not sure if it is, ask for a Steward and find out. I know that some of you think that this won't help. It will! Stand up and be heard. I know you might get the run around from Management. Hold your ground! Don't let Management get the upper hand. We need during these times of being short staffed and Management trying to get away with using this as an excuse to get away with this crap!

Finally, I would like to reiterate the fact that we need Stewards to help protect your rights! Come down, fill out a buck slip with your name, tour and days off. I promise I will get back to you as fast as humanly possible. I would also like to take a moment to say to all of you that if there is any problem or complaint that you have, to please feel free to speak to me personally. I'm usually on tour one and three but try and get to tour two at least once a month. I hope your summer is a safe and happy one and please at least give some thought to getting more involved in your Union.

In Solidarity,

Jim Long

Clerk Craft Director

# MVS Craft Director

## Sisters and Brothers.

Proud, Unified and fighting to make us stronger.  
That's the direction our motor vehicle department is going.

Over the last few years Springfield MVS has grown and so have our obstacles, Each and every week we face new challenges as a Local, but I am convinced that With Unity and Activism, we will succeed.

As we go forward we will vigorously enforce contractual language and seek ways to speed up the grievance procedure and make it more responsive to the needs of our members.

Let me be clear, there will be challenges to protect our Jobs and there will be challenges to protect our seniority. It would be nice if we could all just show up, do our jobs go home and not worry about what tomorrow brings. The reality of the situation is there are people above of us in meetings and watching over us and they are not our friends. They are in a position of their own best interest. The Postal Service is under attack and we are the Postal Service. So, if you as a craft employee are asked to go upstairs with management and it could in anyway lead to discipline. Always ask for a union steward. It is your Weingarten right to Union representation during an investigatory interview.

Our **TEAM** will fight for safe working conditions, respect and dignity. We will fight for our seniority and substantial rights to **due process**.

I completely understand we have tremendous work to do. But I am confident that if we stay proactive, organized and unified we will be in a solid position.

I know I'm ready, but Ed Rowell doesn't win this fight alone. WE as union stewards, WE as proud members, WE as Postal Workers "TOGETHER and UNIFIED" WE will win this fight.

To all our members under 35 years of age. You guys are our future. Get involved, get active, get informed. Our more experienced members, your experience and knowledge would be an invaluable asset to this local. The APWU and our proud Local 497 is encouraging you to reach out to us and be the change you want.

*"In Our Unity, Lies Our Strength!"*

In Solidarity,

**Ed Rowell**

MVS Craft Director Springfield Area Local 497



READ YOUR UNION NEWSPAPER





## Teens Often Think E-Cigs, Hookah Pipes Harmless: CDC

Teenagers who use tobacco products other than cigarettes often see their habit as harmless, a new U.S. government survey finds. The report, from researchers at the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, asked teenagers whether they considered themselves tobacco users. It turned out that kids who favored products like electronic cigarettes, hookahs (water pipes) and smokeless tobacco often failed to see themselves as tobacco users. Even among teens who agreed that "all tobacco products" are harmful, there were many who thought their product of choice wasn't. That included three-quarters of kids who used e-cigarettes, and 56 percent of those who used hookahs. "Teenagers might not realize the products they use contain nicotine and are addictive," said Erika Sward, assistant vice president of national advocacy for the American Lung Association. That means education efforts have to do a better job of tackling the products that are popular with kids these days, Sward added.



The CDC report comes from a survey of over 20,000 U.S. middle school and high school students. Overall, 558 kids said they'd used e-cigarettes in the past month. But 60 percent did not consider themselves a "tobacco user." The same was true of over 80 percent of kids who used "roll your own" or pipe tobacco. Similar patterns were seen among students who'd smoked only cigars or hookahs. Meanwhile, there was a disconnect between what kids thought of tobacco products as a whole, and how they saw their product of choice. Of kids

who used e-cigarettes, most (80 percent) agreed that "all tobacco products" were harmful. Yet only 22 percent thought e-cigarettes were risky. There was a similar disconnect among kids who used hookahs or smokeless tobacco. A hookah is a large water pipe that uses charcoal to heat tobacco, which may be sweetened or flavored. Hookah "lounges" are popular, and Sward said many young people may see hookah smoking as a social activity, rather than tobacco use. As for e-cigarettes, she said, kids may not consider them tobacco products because they are smoke-free. But e-cigarettes do contain nicotine -- which, Sward said, can affect the developing adolescent brain and cause addiction. "Kids who use e-cigarettes are more likely to go on to smoke combustible cigarettes," she noted. On top of that, the U.S. Surgeon General has warned that e-cigarettes may contain other harmful substances -- including heavy metals and ultrafine particles that can be inhaled deeply into the lungs. According to study co-author Dr. Israel Agaku, a researcher with the CDC's Office on Smoking and Health, "Youth use of tobacco products in any form, including e-cigarettes and hookahs, is unsafe."

**More information:** The U.S. National Institute on Drug Abuse has more on [tobacco, nicotine and e-cigarettes](#).  
**SOURCES:** Israel Agaku, D.M.D., Ph.D., M.P.H., senior service fellow, Office on Smoking and Health, U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention; Erika Sward, M.A., assistant vice president, national advocacy, American Lung Association; March 15, 2018, *Pediatrics*, online. Story by Amy Norton, *HealthDay Reporter*, THURSDAY, March 15, 2018, Copyright © 2018 [HealthDay](#). All rights reserved.

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**KEEP A LOOK OUT FOR OUR NEXT RIFLE  
EDITION COMING 9/30/2018 AT APWUSAL.ORG**

## Mary Mehlich: Bridget's Cradle Volunteer

"Live today the way you want to be remembered tomorrow"

-Dillon  
Burroughs

My mother passed away not that long ago, and even though, she lived a fulfilling life it's always sad to see a loved one leave us. She had accomplished a lot in her ninety years --a dedicated special education teacher, Girl Scout leader, and Heimlich maneuver life saver for three choking victims in one year. What touched me the most on the day of her passing was an entry in her guest book that I came across from a former student of hers she had in her class forty years ago. He mentioned that what he remembered most about my mom was how caring, giving, and compassionate she was with each of her students. After reading those kind words, I remember smiling and thought she sure did accomplish what the good Lord put her on this earth for, and I am so proud to be her daughter. Someday, I hope my son can have the same feelings I felt the day that the good Lord took my mom home.

My love for knitting began almost fifty years ago when my sweet elderly neighbor taught my childhood friend and I how to make a pair of slippers topped with a pompom. As the years went on, I always looked forward to knitting blankets for newborn babies and afghans for brides to be. After four years of many tears shed, I was elated to be able to knit sweaters in a rainbow of colors for my new bundle of joy. Shortly after the birth of my son, I packed away my knitting needles since life was beginning to get a little hectic between working full time at the local post office, raising my boy, and caring for my elderly folks.

A couple years ago, I realized that I really missed knitting and was looking to start a new project. I did a little searching and much to my dismay every pattern I came across was either too complicated or looked to be too time consuming. I wanted to knit as a form of relaxation but also with a purpose. Miraculously, one spring day I was drawn to an article in my local newspaper highlighting Bridget's Cradles and the wonderful work of the ministry. It sparked my interest immediately, knitting and sewing, two of my favorite pastimes, creating sweet cradles for little angels.



I am so thankful to be part of this ministry that is so compassionate and loving. It's amazing how quickly it has grown and has reached so many grieving parents across our beautiful country. I thank God that Bridget's Cradles and my path have crossed, and for letting me be part of this wonderful group of

knitters and crocheters. Bridget's Cradles provides handmade knitted and crocheted cradles to over 500 hospitals serving 50 states to offer to families whose

babies were born into heaven in the second trimester of pregnancy.



Please visit  
[bridgetscradles.com](http://bridgetscradles.com)



Want to be featured in the Rifle?  
Send us your pictures and/or stories!!  
We would love to hear from you.  
Email: [editor497dk@gmail.com](mailto:editor497dk@gmail.com)





Greetings Brothers and Sisters!

I would like to take this time to welcome you to the Springfield Rifle! My Associate Editor Jessica Del Negro and I are working hard to bring you an informative paper addressing issues that you want to know about. We have just returned from The APWU 2018 National Convention held in Pittsburgh PA. It was a productive convention. We attended workshops specific to our respective crafts where we acquired some very useful tools enabling us to engage management more effectively in our ongoing struggle to make the workplace safe and equitable for all employees.

As I'm sure you all know, the Trump administration is attempting to privatize the United States Postal Service. This would result in dramatic changes for employees as well as the millions of customers we serve daily. We can stop this from happening but we need to band together and present a united front. We need you! We are asking that you participate. Visit your Union Office and ask what you can do to help in this fight. We are also asking for your input for the newspaper. Have an idea for an article? Do you have pictures you want to submit for future publications? Please submit articles/pictures/ ideas to [editor497dk@gmail.com](mailto:editor497dk@gmail.com). We want to hear from you! Together we can make this work!

In Solidarity,  
Diana Kirkland  
Editor









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### Clerk Stewards

Russ Evans	T2
Gail Demas	T2
Brandon Johnson	T2
Evelyn Seyocurka	T2
Maria Jiminez	T2
Neil Thomas	T2
Anne Provost	T2
Nancy Kenyon	T3
Tammy DeMars	T3
Don Brin	T3
Dave Bogacz	T3
Deb Roberts	T3
Diana Kirkland	T3
Maya Payne	T3
Jackie Ciak	T3
Ebony Mutcherson	T1
Jim Long	T1
Deb Koscielski	T1
Emma Lucas	T1
Jermaine Norfleet	T1
Charlene Lussier	T1
Tara Lanzo	T2

### Maintenance Stewards

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Jeffrey Laing	MSS
David Jones	T2
Stu Kibbe	T3
Michelle Sammataro	T3
Jennifer Doyle	T2
Enid Rivera	T1
Shaun Heady	T1
Jeff Zawalski	T1-T2
Pete Mooradd	T2
Neil Thomas	Pittsfield
Andy Mayo	Agawam

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Hector Torres	T1
David Sims	T1
Dennis Reyes	T1
Tom Brown	T1
George Scott	T2-T3
Maureen Hickson	T2
Justin Lincoln	T2
Robert Burnup	T3
Gerson Carasquillo	T3
Dan Rosso	T3
Robert Hyde	T3
Adrian Piris	T3