

The coveted WA Outstanding Member of the Year award; perhaps the most anticipated portion of the annual state convention. Every year, nominations are received for many well-deserving union members. Nominated persons are considered based on their years of service, notable accomplishments, community service, and attendance record to local, state, and national union functions.

Kurt Eckrem began his postal career in the Marysville Post Office in March of 1991. Having been a Teamsters union member for 21 years at his previous job at a grocery store chain, he also joined the NRLCA. Kurt then tells me that he initially failed the driving test. Upon arriving at the training center, the trainer took one look at his old Datsun truck with one brake light out and refused to let him drive it for his test. Kurt then went home to get his wife's car, which had a manual transmission. She was teaching him how to drive a stick and he wasn't very skilled at the time of the drive test. With a chuckle, Kurt recalls that he didn't do too well and the instructor failed him.

Not too long after, he received a call from the postmaster of the Marysville office who told Kurt that he wanted to hire him. He passed a drive test and had scored a 98 on the relief carrier test, so off he went to Marysville. When he first began his postal career, Kurt still worked graveyard shifts at the grocery store, telling me that he would frequently work graveyard one night, sleep for a couple of hours, and then get up and report for duty in the morning at the post office. He worked this grueling schedule for the first two years of postal employment.

After the grocery chain went out of business, Kurt devoted all his time to the Marysville Post Office as a dual appointment: city carrier and rural carrier. He was guaranteed four hours of work on Sundays running Express mail, or if there was little mail to deliver, he would fill the rest of his time doing whatever work at the post office he could find: emptying trash cans, casing curtailed mail, sweeping.

In all, Kurt worked six years as an RCA, including running an aux route. In 2006, he became a local steward, one of his earliest cases being a termination he had overturned. The RCA was reinstated with full seniority and all records of the termination expunged. It just so happens that this RCA is me and I owe my own postal career to the tireless steward efforts of Kurt who managed to convince our postmaster that I was worth keeping. Since then, Kurt's steward work has always been exemplary and mentoring, as it was through Kurt's encouragement that I was able to pursue a steward position of my own. Ultimately, Kurt decided to take a route at a different office so that I could also become a steward.

Kurt has been active and hands-on in union functions since early 2011, attending county unit meetings, State Conventions, having served as county unit president, attending Western States Conferences, and attending National Conventions. Then at the 2016 WARLCA Convention in Spokane, Kurt was elected to the WARLCA board serving as vice president. In 2018, Kurt moved up to the position of WARLCA president. Apart from just filling in union roles and seats at conventions, Kurt actively engages other members, including in neighboring county units, and actively pursues union recruitment on a regular basis. Kurt even went so far as to request that his relief day be changed so he could attend weekly new hire orientations to give the NRLCA presentation. In doing so, Kurt is responsible for the joining of hundreds of new NRLCA members. Kurt is genuinely passionate about the rural carrier craft and it shows.

Outside of his postal career and union duties, Kurt is also hands-on in legislative action. Kurt is on a first-name basis with his representative, Rick Larsen. He also has attended presidential campaigning functions and done phone calling and doorbelling. Kurt even wrote an op-ed for the local newspaper,

*The Everett Herald*, in July 2013 about the Postal Accountability and Enhancement Act of 2006. In the article, he describes the struggles we face as a company in modern times as well as the immense burden of the prefunding mandate which we happen to still be embattled with. He also urges readers to act: contact Congress, something he himself does on a regular basis. Kurt is very passionate about making the world a better place, even if only in his small corner of it.

Through his many years of service and strength of leadership by example, Kurt is deserving of the recognition. The Washington Rural Letter Carriers' Association is proud to call Kurt Eckrem our 2018-2019 Outstanding Member of the Year. Congratulations, Kurt!