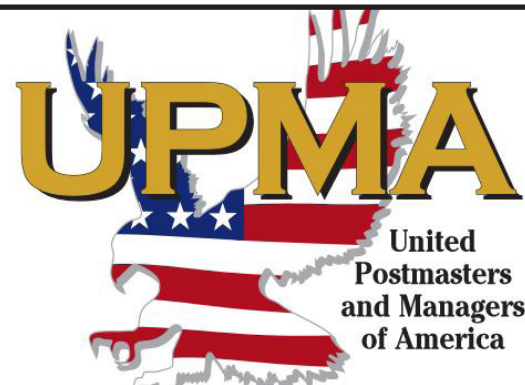


# Illinois Postal News Leader



Oct 2025

United Postmasters and Managers of America ~ Illinois Chapter ~ est. November 1, 2016

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Together  
we *can*!

**UPMA is not a union. It is a professional association.**

**It is an organization of people who hold proud titles. It does not discriminate by race, gender, or salary level. It is a vehicle, an avenue, a method and a tool that can and does help, assist, benefit, and encourage members to be better Postal Managers.**



## Kizzie Austin, President

### New President, New Era

Greetings Everyone,

It is with great excitement and gratitude that I introduce myself as the new President of the Illinois Chapter. I am truly honored to have the opportunity to serve this incredible organization, and I look forward to working together as we continue to build on our chapter's strong foundation.

As your President, I am committed to ensuring that the Illinois Chapter of UPMA remains a professional development, networking, and support organization. Together, we will continue to elevate the meetings and events. I wouldn't be in this position if I had not accepted my first invite to a UPMA event. By voluntarily using my annual leave to attend the different events that UPMA offers, I feel I am developing new skills, collaborating with some amazing members, and it is shaping my career path. This chapter reflects all of us, and your involvement is what

makes it thrive. I encourage you all to get involved, whether it's 10 minutes a month or 10 hours a year; volunteering comes with great rewards. If you're interested in donating some of your time to the Chapter, feel free to let me know, and we will find a committee where you will thrive.

We have an exciting year ahead, filled with opportunities to connect, learn, and grow. I encourage you to stay engaged, participate in our events, and bring your ideas and energy to the table. Whether you are new to the chapter or have been a member for years, your voice matters, and I'm eager to hear from each of you. I look forward to seeing what we can accomplish together. Please do not hesitate to reach out if you have any questions, suggestions, or simply want to connect.

Respectfully,  
Kizzie Austin  
UPMA Illinois Chapter President



## Earl Husbands, Past President

### Reflections of the Past President

As my term as President of the Illinois Chapter of the UPMA came to an end on April 30, 2025, I find myself reflecting on the incredible journey we've shared over the past three and a half years. Serving as your president has been one of the most fulfilling experiences of my life, and I want to take this opportunity to express my heartfelt gratitude to each and every one of you.

When I took on this position, the Illinois UPMA Chapter membership stood at 373 active EAS members. Through our collective efforts, unwavering support, and relentless passion, we have grown to boast an inspiring membership of 1,047 active EAS members! This remarkable achievement is a testament to the commitment and enthusiasm of the Illinois UPMA chapter. Thank you for believing in our vision and for encouraging others to join

our UPMA family.

Throughout my tenure, I have been privileged to forge strong relationships with district leaders and managers in both the Illinois 1 and Illinois 2 Districts. These connections have been instrumental in our growth, enabling us to partner more effectively and advocate for the needs of our members. Together, we've tackled challenges, shared insights, and celebrated successes that have made our chapter vibrant and robust.

One of my proudest accomplishments has been the support we provided to our members. From professional development training sessions to networking events, we've worked hard to create an environment where everyone can thrive. It has been gratifying to see so many of you grow

Cont'd on page 5 - Past President





## Roger Roten, Retiree President

### Message from the Illinois Retiree President

#### Gratitude and Reflections

I would like to extend my heartfelt thanks to all the retirees for their unwavering support over the past few years during my tenure as your Illinois Retiree President. Serving in this role has truly been an honor, and I am grateful for the opportunity to represent you, both within the United Postmasters and Managers of America (UPMA) and in Washington, D.C.

#### Legislative Achievements

The passage of recent legislation marks a significant milestone for federal retirees. For those who the new law has impacted, you should now be receiving the updated

benefit amount. This change is an important step forward, and I am pleased to see it coming to fruition for our community.

#### Looking Toward the Future

Perhaps, if circumstances allow, I may once again seek your support in the future. It was wonderful to reconnect with many of you at the national convention, and I am eagerly anticipating our next gathering in Puerto Rico.

Take care, everyone.

Roger Roten

Illinois Retiree President



## Tenia Thompson, Executive V.P.

### Meet Your New Exec V.P.

#### *Dear UPMA Members,*

I am honored to introduce myself as your newly appointed Executive Vice President. With many years of experience in postal management and a deep commitment to our organization's mission, I am excited to serve you in this leadership role.

It is an honor, and I bring experience in postal operations, team leadership, mentorship, and development. Throughout my career with the United States Postal Service, I have served in various capacities, including as a supervisor, Manager, Workforce Planning, and Postmaster. I am also a Yellow Belt Ambassador for the Illinois 1 District. My experience has given me valuable insight into the challenges and opportunities facing postal managers today.

As your Executive Vice President, my priorities include:

- **Member Advocacy:** Ensuring your voices are heard and your concerns are addressed at all levels
- **Professional Development:** Expanding training and educational opportunities for our members

- **Legislative Support:** Advocating for policies that strengthen postal operations and management positions
- **Communication:** Maintaining open, transparent dialogue between leadership and membership
- **Organizational Growth:** Building UPMA's influence and effectiveness in representing postal managers

I am committed to working tirelessly on behalf of our membership. UPMA has always been a vital advocate for postal managers, and I pledge to continue that tradition while looking for new ways to enhance our effectiveness and value to members.

I encourage all members to reach out with questions, concerns, or ideas. Together, we can continue building a strong, unified voice for postal management professionals.

***Thank you for your trust and support.***

Sincerely,

Tenia Thompson

Executive Vice President, UPMA IL Chapter

in your careers and become leaders in your own right. Our success reflects the collective efforts of our chapter and its strength.

As we make way for our new president, Kizzie Austin, Postmaster of the Millstadt Post Office, I encourage all of you to extend the same support and encouragement to her that you afforded me. Leadership is a collaborative effort, and I am confident that together, you will continue to elevate our chapter to new heights. Embrace this transition with open hearts and minds, and let's ensure that the Illinois UPMA Chapter remains a powerful force for managerial excellence inside the USPS.

***Our success  
reflects the  
collective efforts  
of our chapter  
and its strength.***

Thank you once again for your trust, your support, and for the wonderful memories we've created together.

As is customary in the UPMA tradition, I will remain on the Illinois Executive Board as the Immediate Past President for one year. The Immediate Past President is a non-voting member of the board whose role is to help with the transition. After that, I will continue to look forward to seeing all the amazing things that lie ahead for our chapter, and I'm excited to cheer on our new leadership from the sidelines.

**Keep striving, keep connecting, and keep making a difference!**



**TaLena Franks-Cummings, V.P. Education**

## Meet Your New Vice President of Education

### ***Hello UPMA Family,***

I'm excited and truly honored to introduce myself as your new Vice President of Education. My name is TaLena Franks-Cummings, and I currently serve as the Postmaster of Hammond SDC. I've been with the Postal Service for 27 years, starting as a PTF carrier in Chicago. Over the years, I've worn many hats—supervisor, manager, and now postmaster—but one thing has always remained the same: I love helping people grow and achieve their goals.

I have a special connection to both Illinois and Indiana. I live in Illinois, but I work in Indiana—so I'm proud to support both states. In fact, I like to joke that I'm really invested in them since I pay taxes in both!

As your VP of Education, I am committed to serving

you. My goal is to bring in Subject Matter Experts to train on a variety of topics that will help all of us become stronger leaders and professionals. I also want this to be a two-way street—if there's something specific you'd like to learn about, please don't hesitate to let me know. I'll do everything I can to make it happen.

Thank you so much for placing your trust in me. My door is always open, and I look forward to working with you and learning alongside you. Together, we'll make education a powerful tool for success in UPMA.

Warmly,

TaLena Franks-Cummings  
Vice President of Education, UPMA IL Chapter



## Cindi Cotton, Treasurer

### The True Cost of Bad Leadership—And How to Fix It

Leadership isn't just about managing operations—it's about earning trust, keeping teams strong, and delivering on a promise to every employee. The key to leadership is that it is about other people – the people we lead.

We have all heard the phrase: people don't quit jobs—they quit managers. This isn't the only reason people leave positions, but according to Gallup, poor leadership causes **26% of employee turnover**. This isn't just a staffing issue—it affects mail delivery, service reliability, safety, and public trust. Strong leadership creates strong teams. Weak leadership drags down morale, efficiency, and performance.

Whether you manage a delivery unit, plant operations, or customer service, how you lead matters.

#### What's on the Line?

##### *Lost Productivity*

Disengaged employees are **21–22% less productive**. This leads to missed scans and late deliveries, increased safety incidents and grievances, and higher rates of absenteeism and overtime.

##### *Lower Morale = Higher Sick Leave*

Toxic environments increase stress and burnout—especially during peak seasons. Poor leadership affects both physical and mental well-being, leading to increased unscheduled leave, which can create a snowball effect as fewer employees are required to do more work.

##### *Expensive Turnover*

Turnover means more hiring, more training, and slower delivery times. Losing good people costs time, money, and continuity of operations.

##### *Bad Leadership*

What are the signs of bad leadership? Bad leaders avoid accountability when things go wrong. They micromanage their employees and lead with fear. They will take all the credit, but rarely give it. Bad leaders will block employee development to maintain control and hire for compliance rather than capability. Unless they are willing to grow and change, there is not much that can be done about toxic leaders besides replacing them.

Fortunately, most poor leadership is caused by inadequate preparation. Most postal service postmasters and managers are promoted from within. That's a strength—but it also means people move into management without training. That's why even great carriers or clerks may struggle when promoted to a supervisory role. Outstanding leadership takes training, time, and practice. Inadequate preparation can also be the result of organizational factors.

We are all under constant pressure, meaning we are unable – or don't make time- to build and maintain the essential qualities of good leaders.

You don't need decades of experience to start leading better. Start with these proven habits:

#### **1. Set and Share Clear Goals**

Not setting goals, along with unclear expectations, vision, and direction, leads to frustration and confusion. Without direction, people won't know what they should be doing. They will lack a strong sense of purpose, which in turn leads to lower morale. Whether it's hitting delivery scans or cutting late trips, define **SMART goals: Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, Timely**—and make sure your team knows them.

#### **2. Improve Decision-Making**

While it pays to not rush into things and think before you act, leaders who are slow to act are only hurting themselves and their team. If a process is taking longer than expected, please notify your team. Be open and honest with them that

you don't have an answer yet, but are working on it. To improve your decision-making skills:

- Clarify who's responsible for what. Empower others to make decisions when appropriate.
- Don't delay decisions, set deadlines, then use input, evaluate quickly, then act.
- Learn from mistakes—encourage safe, fast experimentation

### **3. Stay Organized**

Poor organizational skills can lead to poor decision-making, conflict, toxic work environments, and ineffective communication between leaders and employees. Balance work efficiently, and you'll have an easier time managing your team, more productive employees, and fewer mistakes. Organizational skills apply to both mental and physical organization. Some tips are:

- Establish Routines
- Use checklists, station reviews, and route evaluations
- Keep your workspace, reports, and schedules tidy
- Model discipline—it spreads to your team

### **4. Practice Empathy**

Great leaders understand the problems their team faces and communicate with them to remove barriers, enabling their team to do the best job possible. A lack of empathy leads to lower morale, a toxic workplace culture, and reduced trust in leaders among employees. A little compassion and kindness go a long way. Lack of empathy is one of the most damaging impacts of poor leadership, as it erodes trust. A lack of empathy leaves employees feeling disrespected, invalidated, apprehensive about future communications, and distrustful of their leaders and the organization. Remember, leadership is about other people and how you interact with them and help them grow. That is almost impossible to do if there is no trust. Empathy is not about feeling exactly what someone else feels, but about understanding and sharing their emotions.

### **Moving Forward**

Leadership is about influence and guidance, not authoritarian dictates. Viewing challenges as opportunities and mistakes as learning experiences encourages innovation and resilience. Leadership isn't about always being right—it's about getting better.

Ask your team:

“What's one thing I could do differently to support you better?”

“What helps you feel respected and heard?”

Their answers will make you stronger—and more trusted.

### **Mentoring Others**

Up to this point, we have been talking about how to develop your leadership skills. If you manage, you must also help develop strong, positive leadership in others. We need to instill leadership within our culture. Today's new hires will be tomorrow's leaders. Hire for character, not just availability. Mentor and rotate—let people try new tasks and develop new strengths and skills. Invest early in training—don't wait until things break to fix them. You should also support multiple career paths—not everyone wants to supervise, and that's okay. Develop employees where they are and where they want their career to go, not where you want them to go.

**Leadership isn't just a personal journey—it's an organizational necessity.**

**The Postal Service Runs on People. People Run on Leadership.**

The cost of poor leadership? Slower mail, higher turnover, more grievances, and lost employee and public trust. But the solution is within reach. When you lead with clarity, empathy, and consistency, your team will perform better—and feel better. The culture gets stronger. The numbers improve. The mission moves forward. You don't have to be perfect. You just have to keep learning.

***Lead - Deliver - Grow - Together we can!***

## 2026 UPMA Scholarship

We are now accepting applications for the annual Illinois Chapter UPMA Scholarship Award. Those interested in applying must complete the application form, which is in this issue or available at [illinoisupma.org](http://illinoisupma.org) and mail with required information to:

Illinois Chapter UPMA Scholarship Committee  
C/O Shelley Zellers  
12646 SR 78  
Havana, IL 62644

### Scholarship rules:

- Applicant must be a child, stepchild, grandchild, or legal ward of a member or retired member of Illinois UPMA.  
(Past applicants and/or recipients may apply.)
- All information submitted becomes property of the scholarship committee and will be held in strict confidence.
- Application must be postmarked by March 1, 2026.

**PRIORITY MAIL POSTMARK By 3/1/26**

**(eMail Tracking No. to Shelley)**

**OR**

**EMAIL BY 3/1/26 TO: SHELZEL2@YAHOO.COM**

**Include Subject Line: Scholarship Application 2026**



## ILLINOIS CHAPTER UPMA SCHOLARSHIP APPLICATION

Full Name \_\_\_\_\_

Home Address \_\_\_\_\_

Date of Birth \_\_\_\_\_ Phone \_\_\_\_\_

High School Name/Address \_\_\_\_\_

Name of Principal \_\_\_\_\_ Graduation Date \_\_\_\_\_

Number of Students in your class (HS/College) \_\_\_\_\_ Class Rank (HS/College) \_\_\_\_\_

Grade Point Average (HS/College) \_\_\_\_\_ 4.0 Scale/ 5.0 scale (circle)

ACT Score \_\_\_\_\_ SAT Score \_\_\_\_\_

College Name, City & State (currently attending) \_\_\_\_\_

UPMA Sponsor Name/Relationship/Work Address \_\_\_\_\_

Name of Institution or Vocational College you plan to attend \_\_\_\_\_

Have you applied for admission? \_\_\_\_\_ Application accepted? \_\_\_\_\_

Do you currently work? \_\_\_\_\_ For whom? \_\_\_\_\_

Average hours worked per week? \_\_\_\_\_

Do you plan to work while attending college? \_\_\_\_\_

### **The following items must be included with this completed application:**

-Official high school transcript and current college transcript (if applicable)

-Copy of ACT and/or SAT scores

-Two character reference letters written by a non-relative

-Copy of letter of acceptance from the college of choice (if not in college)

-Summary of your high school/college community activities, awards, hobbies

\*List by name & year and include approximate time commitment for each school, community, and volunteer activities:

\***Membership and other participation**-example: Yearbook staff (10, 11, college)

25 hrs/month for 6 months. Basketball (9, 10, 11, college) 40 hrs/month for 5 months.

\***Leadership positions/offices held**-example: Student Council (9, 10, 11, 12) 12 hrs/month for 5 months.

4-H Leader (11, 12) 5 hrs/month for 4 months.

\***Honors/Awards**-example: All conference basketball (11, 12). Jr. Rotarian (10).

\***Volunteer work**-example: Candy striper (11, 12) 20 hrs/month for 3 months.

\***Paid work positions**-example: Grocery store (10, 11) 16 hrs/month for 2 months.

-What are your career goals? How would this scholarship help you attain them?



# UPMA



## United Postmasters and Managers of America

### 2026 ILLINOIS CHAPTER STATE CONVENTION Chicago Marriott O'Hare Rosemont, IL

Thursday, April 16<sup>th</sup> - Sunday, April 19<sup>th</sup>

NAME \_\_\_\_\_

OFFICE \_\_\_\_\_ ZIP CODE \_\_\_\_\_

PERSONAL PHONE \_\_\_\_\_ FIRST TIMER? \_Y\_ \_N\_

Please check one:

_____	Postmaster	_____	Auxiliary Member
_____	Supervisor	_____	Retired UPMA Member
_____	Manager	_____	Associate Member

\$35 from April 15th thru December 31st, 2025  
\$50 registration after January 1st, 2026 until March 1st, 2026

Register online at [www.illinoisupma.org](http://www.illinoisupma.org)  
Or send check or money order to  
UPMA Treasurer, 1509 Hamilton Street, Pekin, IL 61544-3737



## PS Form 3526

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*Free 1 Year Membership  
Offer for EAS Employees*

Know A Retiree?  
Pass Them Form 1187R  
To Stay Engaged!

## Article Due Dates

Dec 1, 2025

March 22, 2026

May 22, 2026

Please remember that **all members are welcome to submit articles.** All content is subject to the approval of the Editor and State President. Submit to:  
**IPN\_Editor@Yahoo.com**

## Upcoming Events

### **Legislative Summit**

Hyatt Regency Crystal City,  
Arlington, VA  
March 15 - 17, 2026

### **IL Chapter Convention**

Chicago Marriott O'Hare, Rosemont, IL  
April 16 - 19, 2026

### **10th Annual UPMA National Convention**

El Conquistador Resort, Puerto Rico  
August 1 - 7, 2026

### **Central Area Officers Symposium**

