

The mail, the message(s)



**Philip
Dine**

They say it takes a village. Sometimes, though, it may take a country—or at least a country full of letter carriers.

Delivering the mail, professionally and reliably—*check*. Delivering a bevy of other services, whether assisting residents or helping feed millions of Americans—*check*. Delivering our message and thereby changing the national conversation about the Postal Service—*check*.

And now, when it is needed more than ever—with so many challenges and opportunities—you are taking care of business by delivering the broadest of messages in a variety of ways.

What does the Postal Service need to weather the pandemic and economic shutdown, and to help Ameri-

cans everywhere by bringing them the mail and supplies they need? Will USPS be able to assure people that their voices will be heard in November, with mail ballots handled securely and efficiently?

You are addressing these and many other issues with enthusiasm, creativity and determination.

And, so, we have Amanda Beckley, president of Branch 1412 in Garden City, KS, who was sufficiently compelling in depicting the role of the Postal Service and letter carriers that the *Kansas Reflector* headlined the column, “Dear Kansans—can we at least not fight about the Postal Service?”

The columnist wanted someone who could describe what the mail means to folks in a small town, and Kansas State President Andy Tuttle knew just who could humanize and localize the issue for Kansans. Amanda has an 11-mile walking route in Garden City—which is 200 miles from a city in one direction, 300 miles in the other.

She explained how the post office unites the community, so vital in times like these, leading the columnist to end the piece as follows: “Making sure the U.S. Postal Service is OK is the least we could do in return for its service.”

Reporters speculating beyond their knowledge about recent USPS practices encounter a calm and reasoned voice in Detroit Branch 1 President Sandy Laemmel, who tells them not what they want to hear, but what they need to know, benefiting their audience—and us.

In Kentucky, we have a state president in Bob McNulty who constantly sends our way journalists aiming to tell the postal story—and who fills us in on coverage we may not be aware of, as does fellow Bluegrass State resident Jim Smith, a retired Lexington letter carrier.

From New Bedford, MA, letter carrier Wayne Johnson was part of a virtual national tribute to essential workers on Labor Day,

putting his public speaking and audio production background to good use. Just six years into his postal career, he recently was elected vice president of Southeast Massachusetts Branch 18.

Wayne was brought to our attention by Region 14 National Business Agent Rick DiCecca, who has been invaluable in several such instances. Speaking of NBAs, whether Region 1’s Bryant Almario, Troy Clark in Region 6 or Troy Fredenburg in Region 7, or others recently cited in this space, each and every NBA’s office has provided a major boost to NALC’s communications efforts.

Residents of the San Francisco Bay Area got a lesson in postal finances and legislation from retired letter carrier Ivars Lauersons of Vallejo, whose expansive 477-word letter to the editor fittingly ended: “Keep in mind this information as you read breaking news about the post office.”

We received more calls from journalists in Montana in a single day recently than over the entire past decade; fortunately, we have Montana State President Julie Quilliam to turn to for support, much as we have benefited from the presence in North Dakota of Rachel Freehauf and many other state presidents elsewhere.

If this part ends here, it’s not because the names do, but because the space does.

I’ve never seen a union with so many members in so many positions doing so much to communicate a message. At this point, it goes beyond providing information on finances or legislation; it’s also the reassuring and knowledgeable tone, so needed now in a society that often seems unhinged.

But it doesn’t stop there.

By your words and your actions on the job, your willingness as essential workers to take risks for the greater good, doing so with consistent grace and courage, you’re also sending the broadest of messages—about the value of the Postal Service, its ability to handle the challenges of the election, its competence, its integrity.

That transcends any specific issue; it affects how people think of the United States Postal Service and the letter carriers it employs.

On so many levels, you are sending a profound message to the American people. Before this is all over, it will have resonated in every corner of this country.

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