

Letter carriers and the mail on social media

Various news stories and interesting anecdotes that celebrate letter carriers and the mail have been appearing on social media. The following are some that have come to the union’s attention. If you come across a story you’d like us to consider featuring, send it to social@nalc.org.

Miniature residents move into a Michigan mailbox home

When Michigan residents Don and Nancy Powell built their mailbox to

resemble a miniature version of their house, they didn’t intend to also have miniature people living inside. However, that’s exactly what they got last August, when Don opened their mailbox to find a couple of dolls.

The male doll was dressed in a tan suit, and the female doll in a floral-patterned dress. Don told *The Washington Post* that he asked the neighbors, but nobody admitted to placing the dolls inside. He posted on Nextdoor, stating that “a homeless

couple has taken up residence inside our mailbox,” but still got no answers. Don thought, “This must just be a joke, and whoever left them here will come back to get them.”

The dolls didn’t go anywhere; instead, over the next few days, their mailbox was furnished with a miniature sofa, coffee table and rug. Don, who seemed to appreciate the joke, said that he “left a note of [his] own, saying that what the home really needed was a refrigerator stocked

Don Powell shows off the dolls who have moved into his mailbox.



with food”—and although the dolls never got their fridge, they did receive a bed, a painting and a stove. At some point, a note was left in the mailbox, thanking the Powells for “the lovely mailbox home” and explaining that they were happy to find a one-story after living in a Dutch-style dollhouse.

The mastermind behind this scheme continues to add things every few months—on Halloween, the dolls were replaced with skeleton versions of themselves dressed as witches; in December, the dolls got to celebrate with a tree and a pile of presents; and, at this point, the doll couple has adopted a cat, and has moved in “their cousin Shirley [and her] service dog named Maggie,” according to Don.

Though some neighbors think that Don placed the dolls there himself, both Nancy and their neighbor, Terry Falahee, can vouch for his innocence. Terry explained that “Don has a lot of skill sets, but doing something this detailed with dolls isn’t his forte.”

However, Don has contributed something—when the artist began leaving miniature mail for the residents, Don added a miniature mailbox to the outside of the Powells’ mailbox. He says that he doesn’t want to know who’s behind the scheme: “People in the neighborhood are enjoying it and stop by sometimes to ask questions. Some people ask if I’ve thought about installing an outdoor camera, but personally, I like the mystery of it.”

New York carrier makes a splash in the ‘Jeopardy!’ pool

On March 21, a Schenectady, NY, letter carrier had the opportunity to compete on “Jeopardy!”—the most highly rated quiz show on television.

Charlotte Diffendale poses with “Jeopardy!” host Ken Jennings. Her jacket made such an impression that she she posted to Twitter about it (below).



Charlotte Diffendale
@FederalLoaf

The whole @Jeopardy crew is so warm and supportive. When I got offstage (still stinging a little) one of the awesome contestant coordinators told me “the day your episode airs you should wear that jacket on your route, and don’t tell anyone why.” I LOVED IT. SO I DID.



Charlotte Diffendale, a Northeastern New York Branch 358 member, posted on Twitter the day before the show aired, to show her studying method: more than 50 double-sided pages of trivia questions.

She first auditioned for the show seven years ago, attributing her love for the program to watching it with her family all throughout her childhood and adolescence since it first aired. She even noted to *The Times Union* that she knew former host Alex Trebek’s favorite animal was a musk ox, and that ever

since his death in 2020, Diffendale has donated to an Alaskan farm, the Musk Ox Farm, to symbolically adopt a musk ox. Trebek was such a strong supporter of this farm that he was dubbed “herd grandfather” during his lifetime.

Though Diffendale didn’t win on the show, she made a huge impression on the internet with the bright red marching band blazer she chose to wear during the competition. The blazer had a black collar and golden fish-shaped buttons. Viewers cheered Diffendale on, complimenting her on her “bold choice” of attire and comparing her to everyone from Michael Jackson to the Beatles’ Sgt. Pepper album to a ringmaster. Diffendale said of the jacket: “My sister calls that jacket ‘Ringmaster of the Trout Circus,’ so that’s usually how I think of it.” She added that she’d watch any show with that name, given her love for animals.

Diffendale finished in second place with a score of \$5,199. She didn’t get to keep it, though, as second place

Social media (continued)

takes home \$2,000 and third place receives \$1,000. However, she said that winning or losing “doesn’t matter,” because “it was all about the experience. Right after the show I was OK about not winning, then I got down about it, but I gave myself the trip home to get over it. By the time I got to [a layover], I was back to being OK.”

Beloved Nebraska carrier receives warm sendoff

On April 2, Lincoln, NE, carrier **Jim Larsen** delivered his last route after 37 and a half years with the Postal Service. However, the local elementary school wasn’t going to let him go without a celebration: Students at Stoddard Elementary lined up on the sidewalks to say goodbye and wish the Branch 8 member a happy retirement.

The principal, Kevin Janssen, told the *Beatrice Daily Sun*: “I wanted the kids to realize that he works hard

every single day; whether we have school or not, he has to work.”

Larsen stopped by the elementary school every day and chatted with him and the support staff, Janssen said, adding, “He took the time not just to deliver mail, but to know people. He’s a true member of our Orangemen family.”

The whole incident came as a pleasant surprise to Larsen. “I saw the kids coming out, but thought they were going for a field trip or a walk or something,” he said. “I had no idea they were doing this.”

The postmaster and Larsen’s supervisor were present to witness the send-off and they sung Larsen’s praises. “He’s always there,” Postmaster Jodi Berke, who has worked with Larsen for seven years, said of his work ethic. “Just like his mail route, you can pretty much set your clock by him. He never misses and always does his job. That’s what he’s done his whole life.”

Berke said that without Larsen, “it’ll be different. Even during the pandemic, he was always there and dependable. We’re going to miss him.”

Life—and mail delivery—slowly return to normal in East Palestine

After the derailment of a train containing hazardous materials in East Palestine, OH, all aspects of life were affected, including postal service.

Youngstown, OH Branch 385 member **Dan Figley**, a lifelong resident of East Palestine, told the *Morning Journal* that only a small percentage of the mail was able to be delivered before the mandatory evacuation order around noon on Saturday, Feb. 4. Though some carriers used their saved time off to stay at home during the evacuation, most reported to the office.

“Nobody knew what to do at first, or what was going on, so Monday everyone came in so we could get a head count and make sure everyone from the office was safe, because most of our staff live in the affected area,” Figley explained. He said that there was an attempted re-routing of incoming mail to nearby offices to ensure that residents still received their mail during that week.

By Feb. 9, the morning after the evacuation order was lifted, the carrier was back out on his route. “Today is our first day back in the office, and we’ll be out in force today, and be making multiple rounds. We’re all really just happy to be back,” he said.

Though Figley didn’t have to evacuate, a family member of his who did ended up staying with him, and he said that the whole situation gave



Stoddard wishes Jim Larsen a happy retirement.

Dan Figley delivers to a resident on his first day on the route after the derailment accident in East Palestine, OH.



everyone a fright. “I think we all have questions, and there aren’t people answering them. I think the biggest question is how a train can go 17 miles an hour with a wheel on fire and nobody notices or does something about it,” he said.

He also explained that most people in the affected town don’t have rainy day funds to cover a week of expenses. “Most people here live paycheck to paycheck, if they can even make it that long, and don’t have money to pay for hotel rooms, or new clothes, and food for an extended period on short notice.” Thankfully, those who needed support were able to, in many cases, receive it from nonprofits, shelters and other organizations.

Daughter of NALC members raises money for NALC DRF

The daughter of an NALC national business agent (NBA) and a Headquarters staff member will be raising money for the NALC Disaster Relief Foundation in her upcoming softball season.

Mia Davidson, the daughter of Region 9 NBA Eddie Davidson and Assistant to the President for Community Services Christina Vela Davidson, plays professional softball for Athletes Unlimited, a newly formed professional sports organization with a mission to “empower athletes as leaders, promote inclusive ownership focused on long-term financial and personal well-being of athletes, and bring fans closer to the game by innovating on and off the

field.” Its “Athlete Causes” program gives athletes the opportunity to play a season partly to benefit a nonprofit of their choice, not only providing donations but also bringing attention to the cause. At the end of the season, the Give Lively Foundation makes a grant to the chosen organization equal to half of the athlete’s season-ending bonus.

Davidson has chosen to play for the NALC Disaster Relief Foundation, the program created by NALC to help members suffering after-effects of natural disasters. The program offers hands-on relief in the form of physical assistance, emotional assistance and supplies, and also provides financial support through grants, funded by NALC, branch fundraising events and donations both from members and corporate sponsors.

Members can make donations by sending a note about their interest to the NALC Disaster Relief Foundation at 100 Indiana Ave. NW, Washington, DC 20001-2144, by sending an email to DisasterReliefFoundation@nalc.org or by calling 202-423-2443. **PR**

