

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.

Massachusetts flash mob meant to attract new hires

The Postal Service is hiring in Massachusetts—but instead of posting job listings, USPS tried a unique method to attract new workers. One weekday morning in February, commuters in Boston's South Station became an audience to a flash mob of postal workers. The song playing on the overhead speaker system was the 1960s classic "Please Mr. Postman" by the Marvelettes.

Alison Maher, the employee development manager for the Massachusetts-Rhode Island District, told WCVB-TV, the city's ABC affiliate, that her team's idea for the recruitment was a result of "trying to think outside the box on advertising." Maher attributed the idea to human resources clerk Kim Nilson, and the dance was choreo-

graphed by Danielle Salamasidis, a training technician.

More than a dozen postal workers from three carrier units showed up to participate, one donning an eagle costume. In addition to the dance, several postal workers handed out invitations to hiring events or held banners advertising links to job postings. The flash mob was covered by *The Daily Free Press*, a Boston University student newspaper, and WCVB's YouTube video of the event has received more than 5,600 views.

Mississippi carriers restore town's normalcy after tornadoes

One unwritten part of the job for letter carriers is restoring a sense of normalcy to a community hard hit by a disaster, signifying that things will soon get better. This was certainly the case in parts of Mississippi that were slammed by destructive tornadoes in late March, as reported in an AccuWeather newscast.

The tornadoes in Rolling Fork, MS, were so disastrous that the roof of the post office blew off, but after they passed, letter carriers diligently con-

tinued trudging their routes in an attempt to bring normalcy to the town. The reporter noted that as she walked amid the devastation downtown, including

a damaged 18-wheeler, she spotted a table covered with envelopes and packages that lifted residents' spirits. The reporter added that the interior of the post office was largely destroyed, but she offered the thought that the word "tornado" could now be added to the old adage about "neither rain nor sleet nor snow" keeping carriers from their rounds.

Postal employees spoke of their desire to return some normalcy to residents, and the reporter noted that an upended and muddy but still functioning mail truck (pictured above) had been put back in service to deliver mail—and hope—to residents.

"It's important to provide that to residents, and the Postal Service is a big part of accomplishing it," a postal employee said.



The flash mob in Boston's South Station

Arizona letter carrier calls on residents to help older woman

Ra'sheen Turpin loves his job. For eight of his nine years as a letter carrier, he has had the privilege of delivering in the Garfield Historic Neighborhood, a culturally rich neighborhood in Phoenix, AZ. The Branch 576 member knows many of the residents by name and has even witnessed children on his route grow up to become letter carriers themselves.

On March 13, Turpin was delivering on his route when he spotted Margo,



Left: Ra'sheen Turpin was interviewed about his roll in helping Margo's lawn get mowed.

Right: Eric Blackshear explained about how he goes out of his way for his customer, Lisa Taylor.



an 81-year-old resident, dragging dead palm fronds across her yard to create a pile. Turpin was aware of her mobility issues after a fall she took years ago, and he told KPNX-TV, the city's NBC affiliate, "It was just sad to see that. She had no tools that you could see."

Turpin posted on a Garfield Historic Neighborhood page, calling residents to come help Margo with the yard work. It took only a few hours before people were volunteering. Samantha Young, who came to help, said, "It was just too big of a job. She's probably on a fixed income and can't afford to get her big yard done." Young, who owns a yard work business, had the front yard cleaned in a matter of hours. She happily did the work for free, though some residents donated money for her efforts.

Margo told KPNX that while she loves taking care of her yard, it's been more difficult since her fall three years ago. "I do the best I can. Whatever I can do, I do," Margo said. "But I can't do it all like I would like." She is grateful to Young and Turpin for going above and beyond.

"It's called [the] United States Postal Service; people forget the 'service' part," Turpin said. "We're here to help. It cost nothing to be kind—nothing."

Georgia carrier and resident form a friendship over mail

For a resident whose favorite thing is mail, a letter carrier comes as a blessing. Warner Robins, GA, letter carrier **Eric Blackshear** delivers to lots of houses on his route, but the

most memorable one belongs to Missie Ayers and her older sister, Lisa Taylor. Taylor, 52, has a developmental disability, which can make it difficult for her to express herself, but mailing and receiving cards has always been a source of happiness for her.

"We weren't around for her birthdays and holidays, so we started a mail campaign where all of the relatives would mail her cards and put stickers or a dollar bill in, and mom would FaceTime her going to the mailbox and checking the mail," Ayers explained to WMAZ-TV, the city's CBS affiliate.

Though their mother eventually died, Ayers helped continue the tradition. However, the flow of mail slowed, so Taylor instead found joy in giving rather than receiving. Ayers explained that Taylor loves to make cards and pass them out to whoever she comes across.

"She came running in the house, and she got some cards and stickers and met [Blackshear] back down at the road. He stopped and pulled over and got out, and she had mail for him and ever since then she's literally been watching for him," Ayers said.

She posted on Facebook about her appreciation for Blackshear, and he happened to stumble upon the post. "I thought about [Taylor]; I'm like, maybe I'll get her a gift, so I bought her a mail truck, a replica mail truck, and she never put it down. From that point on, she looked at me, she smiled, she hugged me, and it just made me feel good," the Branch 4057 member said.

Blackshear appreciates the oppor-

tunity to make someone's day. "Like my mother and father taught me, you know, you're nice to people, never disrespect anybody. You never know what people are going through, so it doesn't hurt you to be nice," he said.

Post office renamed for immigrant letter carrier

About 1 in 5 bills passed in Congress are for renaming a postal facility for a famous or beloved person. Some are well-known heroes. Others are heroic American soldiers. Many are named for postal employees, some of them letter carriers.

One recent post office renamed for a letter carrier caught the attention of retired Rockville, MD Branch 3825 member **Mitchell Reissman**. The carrier who was honored, **Jesus Collazos**, was his sister's stepson's uncle. Collazos carried the mail in Arlington, VA, for 25 years before he died of COVID-19 and other health problems in 2020 after enjoying just a year of retirement.

"In my 38 years of service with the Post Office," Reissman said, "I have never seen a postal facility renamed to honor someone that I personally knew." Reissman did some research and found many interesting post office monikers. Post offices have been named for baseball player Mickey Mantle, labor leader Cesar Chavez, entertainers Bob Hope and Nat King Cole, and former presidents and other elected officials. Perhaps the most famous letter carrier whose name adorns a post office is Vincent Sombrotto, the former leader of the Great Postal Strike of 1970 and then NALC president. The postal building where Sombrotto emerged as a leader of the strike, Grand Central Station Post Office in New York City, was named for

News

Right: Michael, Luz and Vanessa Collazos hold a photo of their late father and husband, Jesus.

Far right: This plaque now hangs on the wall of the Jesus Collazos Post Office.



Social media (continued)

him in 2014. “What company to keep,” Reissman said.

A bill to rename a post office is nearly always introduced by the member of the House of Representatives from the district where the post office is located. The House Oversight and Government Reform Committee considers the bills, and by informal rule, will only pass such a bill when every House member from the state signs on as a co-sponsor. The bill must go through the same process as any other legislation—passage by the House and Senate and approval by the president. Bills to rename post offices may take time to pass, but they are almost never rejected.

As reported by *dcist.com*, in the case of Collazos, Rep. Don Beyer, the House member for Arlington, sponsored the renaming bill which passed in December.

Collazos, Reissman said, was born in Cala, Colombia, in 1955. He was educated as an accountant, but immigrated to the United States in 1978 to join his family, and went on to become a beloved letter carrier. Hundreds of customers on his route shared stories of Collazos going the extra mile to help them in various ways.

At the ceremony to formally rename the post office, Arlington County Board Chairman Christian Dorsey read from a letter of support from a postal patron: “Oh how I wish the world were populated with more people like Jesus,” the letter read.

“I believe that says it all,” Dorsey added.

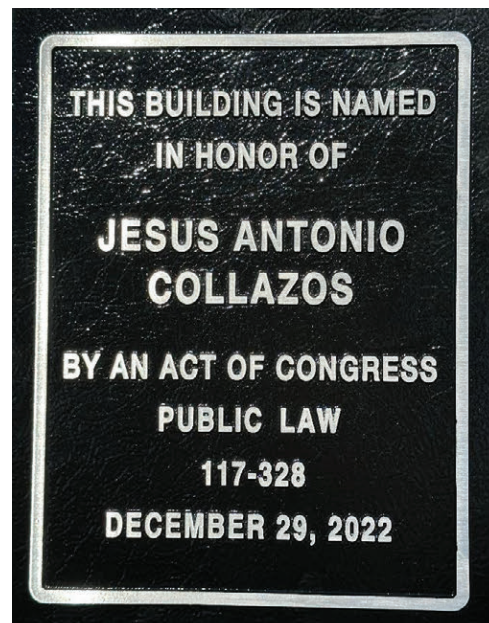
Beloved California carrier retires after 30 years

In the 30 years of his career, Richmond, CA, carrier **Angel Pagan** has come to appreciate a routine. He gets up before sunrise, embarks on an hour-long run, showers, eats breakfast, reads the Bible and hopes to have a good day. However, it’s finally time for Pagan to come up with a new daily schedule, as he drove his last route on March 11.

The Greater East Bay Branch 1111 carrier’s residents appreciated him, and they showed that with their retirement gifts of wine, farewell cards, a plant and a watercolor portrait. Pagan knew everyone’s name, followed everyone’s specific delivery requests

without fail, and always put thought into his deliveries, placing mail underneath the doormat and placing packages out of view for safety reasons.

Resident John Gilbert joked to *Berkeleyside*



that Pagan’s name is appropriate, as “he really is an angel.” Resident Ernest Isaacs credited Pagan as being the best mailman he’s ever had. “Whoever we get next isn’t going to be Angel, that’s for sure,” Isaacs said.

And it wasn’t only his residents for whom Pagan went the extra mile—whenever the post office needed workers, Pagan would pick up additional shifts. His wife noted that the job was so important to him that sometimes, he would talk about mailboxes in his sleep.

“Berkeley was the greatest place, man, it was heaven to me,” Pagan said. “When you get in the post office and you wear that blue suit, there’s so much respect.”

On the day of his retirement, residents gifted Pagan a \$1,000 check, and Isaacs presented Pagan with a binder full of pages of kind thank-yous and send-offs from a Nextdoor post about Pagan’s retirement. Pagan was immensely grateful for the kindness.

As a child, Pagan had no idea that he would become a letter carrier. Instead, he dreamt of playing baseball with the greats, and played as a catcher on his high school team. However, when he got older, he had a family to support, so he decided to take the postal exam.

Pagan’s retirement plans include playing more guitar—in particular, writing a love song for his wife. The working title is: “Can’t Make It Without You, Sweetheart.” “That sounds like a hit already, doesn’t it?” Pagan said. **PR**



Angel Pagan