



# It's Elementary

## Garden State carrier crusades for writing right

**C**ape Atlantic New Jersey Branch 903 member Joe Bancheri is a community-minded letter carrier with an ambitious mission: to impress upon elementary school pupils his passion for, and the importance of, the written word.

"If we teach our kids to write letters," said Bancheri, an 11-year carrier and founder of the Let's Write/Right America program, "there's a good possibility that their communication skills will improve, as well as their reading skills."

A little more than a year ago, Bancheri launched his campaign by organizing a stamp design contest at the school attended by his two young children, Assumption Regional Catholic School in Atlantic City's northern suburbs.

"The contest was a big hit," said Bancheri, who assembled a panel of judges—including several fellow carriers and representatives from the local post office—to select the best entries. He also encouraged all the contest's participants to upload their artwork to the stamps.com website so that their designs could be used for self-generated, computerized postage.

Next, Bancheri helped students compose letters of introduction to the clients of the South Jersey Field of Dreams project, an organization that provides a place for physically and mentally

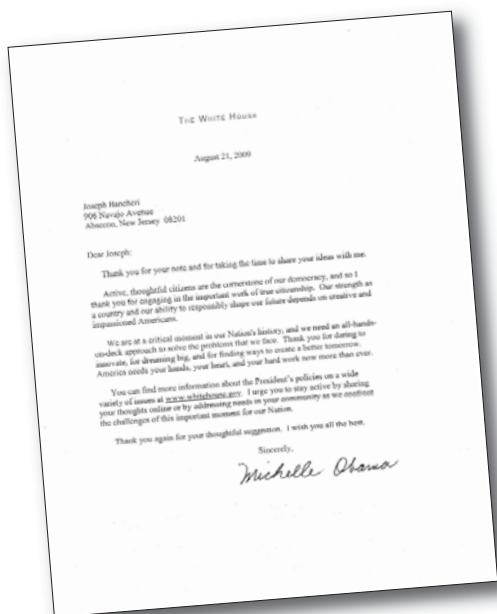
challenged children and adults to play baseball. In the works is a project to send letters of support to those serving in the military. Eventually, Bancheri would like to see letter writing become a regular part of a school's curriculum.

"Right now, though, we're just trying to build relationships with schools and organizations," said Bancheri, adding, "That sure takes a lot of leg work."

Fortunately, he receives a lot of support from his fellow Branch 903 members, he said. "Besides donating postage money, they've gotten together and provided pizzas at the end of Assumption's track-and-field day, as a way of showing their appreciation for the work the students did."

Bancheri told *Shore News Today* that one inspiration for reaching out to the community at large comes from his contact with the many immigrant families he delivers mail to every day. "My parents were immigrants," he said. "Your first contact in America is with your mailman. He's your first impression. If you need something, you ask him. Being a mailman is more than just delivering the mail. You see all these people. You get involved."

Indeed, Bancheri's name might be familiar to *Postal Record* readers. He was featured in the April 2009 edition in a Proud to Serve item describing how he



At top: Two winners from a stamp design contest held at Assumption Regional Catholic School.

Above: A letter of support from First Lady Michelle Obama.

# Project seeks to bring back lost art of letter writing

By Peter Sánchez

thier than the  
ed an initia-  
suee e-  
down and  
stamp-  
school in  
winners  
at least  
writing  
pens,  
ings  
ere-  
er-



Standing in Assumption School, Galloway on May 27 with their plaques awarded for their stamp designs are Dominique Cordivari (2nd place), Morgan Bryte (1st place), and Camryn Denver (3rd place).

Post Office, said that about a year ago, Bancheri proposed the idea of a letter-writing campaign to him. After contacting schools about Let's Write/Right America, the May program at Assumption School was set up.

Now, Wolicki says, other postmasters in New Jersey, and from states such as California, Florida, Illinois, Nebraska and Minnesota, are interested in bringing the program to their towns. He has even reached out to the Obama Administration and Oprah Winfrey. As well, local businesses, school-parents, and other teachers are lending their support. The Absecon post office donated the plaques given to the stamp design winners on May 27, as well as the 200 stamps used to mail the written letters.

For Wolicki, "I'd rather get a letter from my grandchildren or children, than a phone call. It's something I can keep."

The Knights of Columbus Villa Maria Council 6342 are also supporting the program, as is the National Association of Letter Carriers. Bancheri is also looking for sponsors, local and corporate, to help the cause.

Bancheri is also hoping to start a pen pal program with the Absecon-based South Jersey Field of Dreams organization, which provides physically and mentally disabled children and adults the opportunity to play America's pastime, baseball.

"It's a great idea, it's wonderful (for students) to reach out to those their own age who are disabled, and learn from them, remarked Barry Hackett, Board Chairman of Field of Dreams.

"It's nice to receive a letter from somebody."

## SERVICE, SAFETY, SUCCESS. EASTERN AREA UPDATE

July/August 2009

Vol. 8 No. 3

### Station, branch optimization USPS STUDIES RETAIL NETWORK, OFFICE CONSOLIDATIONS

The Postal Service currently is examining the possible consolidation of delivery and retail functions among some of its larger (EAS-24 and above) stations and branches. The follows aggressive cost control measures already taken, such as adjusting carrier routes, consolidating various mail-processing and Tour operations, and restructuring administrative functions.

According to DPMO and COO Pat Donahoe, the survey will identify opportunities to consolidate primarily those stations and branches that are located near each other and that — due to changing operational processes — have excess floor space.

Within the past decade, the options provided for customers to conduct their postal business have increased exponentially — with many choices not involving a visit to the Post Office.

In fact, says Donahoe, nearly 30 percent of all USPS revenues comes from alternative access points such as contract postal centers, Stamps by Mail, Automated Postal Centers, ATMs, and approved shaper programs.

The bottom line is that we will not take away retail access from who was informed by state received a doctorate in edu-  
See SUPER on page 12



Assumption Regional Catholic School in Galloway, NJ, was the kick-off site for the Let's Write/Right America initiative. The first step was a stamp design contest. Winners (from left) Camryn Denver, Dominique Cordivari and Morgan Bryte show their winning designs to Father Mike Matveenko. See story, page 3.

# Postman launches program to encourage letter writing

By STEVE PRISAMENT  
Staff Writer

ABSECON — Joseph Bancheri is a postman who says he really believes in letter writing.

"Letters are incredibly special for the receiver as well as the sender," Bancheri said Monday, July 6. "I think people want to slow down a little, return to the past, be outside, enjoy their families."

He understands the value of high-tech communication, Bancheri said, but people should take off one day a month and savor all aspects

of their lives.

And that's where his Let's Write/Right America program comes in.

"Letter writing brings out deeper feelings instead of an instant feeling," he said.

"Reading helps youngsters in all their school subjects. And writing helps them grow academically."

That, he said, is why he is developing a program intended to reach schoolchildren.

The program encourages youngsters to write letters. And, Bancheri said, he has gotten support from manage-

ment and the union at the post office.

"They like the focus being on writing with the grandparents at the top of the list," he said. "Then come aunts and uncles. Then politicians — the president — then soldiers."

He said he has received support from everyone he has talked to.

"I've talked to teachers, principals, retired professors, parents, businesspeople — just about everyone — and they all love the idea," Bancheri said. "The union presidents, postmasters and letter carriers are on board. Postmasters

in Cape May are starting a program. A letter carrier in Minnesota is starting a program. We will be on the front cover of the Postal Update for July/August."

To get youngsters interested in writing, Bancheri started with a stamp designing contest at Assumption Regional Catholic School in Galloway Township, where three winners were announced on May 27 at an assembly attended by Church of the Assumption pastor Rev. Michael Matveenko, Galloway Township Mayor Tom Bassford, Absecon Post-

master Stephen Wolicki and a number of letter carriers.

Wolicki donated 200 stamps to mail the students' letters, and the plaques that were given as prizes. Bancheri's union provided 60 pizzas for lunch at Assumption's field day on Monday, May 31.

"This is what has been described as a pilot program," Bancheri said. "Eventually, sponsors will be the public and the United States Postal Service employees. If this becomes an actual program, I know many people will donate, because I am already

getting businesses and private individuals willing to contribute."

Bancheri, who lives in Absecon with his wife, Natalie, and their son Luke, 10, and daughter, Julia, 8, was born and raised in Atlantic City. He has also lived in the Smithville section of Galloway Township. His children attend Assumption School.

"There are a lot of big managers very interested in getting this off the ground," Bancheri said. "I'm confident I alone can get a huge amount from my patrons  
See LETTERS on Page 15

came to the aid of a customer who appeared to be suffering heat stroke.

Bancheri admits, however, he also has an ulterior motive for his Let's Write/Right America campaign. "I don't want to see the USPS die," he told the local newspaper. "I feel [it] is vital to the unity of this country. I want our work to constantly remind people of the good we do." Encouraging kids to write letters, he said, could be an effective means to that end.

"Text and e-mail messages can be easily erased," Bancheri said. "Letters endure, and getting students to appreciate letter writing while they're young should help them hold on to that appreciation as they get older."

Principal Mary Ellen Schurtz of the Assumption school agrees. She told the Diocese of Camden, New Jersey's *Catholic Star Herald* newspaper she sees

far too often "the disadvantages of texting and e-mail; students aren't practicing grammar skills." Besides, she noted, "The act of writing a letter allows students to practice their penmanship, and the personal aspect of writing shows the effort that the student has put forth."

Thanks to some local and national media attention, awareness of Bancheri's mission is spreading. The carrier has spoken with Pitney Bowes representatives about possible sponsorship opportunities, and several postmasters across the country have expressed an interest in bringing the campaign to their offices.

Anyone interested in participating in Let's Write/Right America is encouraged to contact Joe Bancheri—how else?—by mail, at 906 Navajo Avenue, Absecon, NJ 08201. ✉

Some of the clippings Bancheri has generated thus far.