Cape 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
I went 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 continue and to remind people of the good we do." Encouraging kids to write letters, he said, could be an effective means to that end. 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.

Principal Mary Ellen Schurtz of the Assumption school agrees. She said, "I feel it is vital to the unity of this country. I want our work to continue and to remind people of the good we do." 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 interest in bringing the campaign to their offices. Anyone interested in participating in Let's Write/Right America is encouraged to contact Joe Bancheri—by mail, at 906 Navajo Avenue, Absecon, NJ 08205.