

A friendship formed by service



Most letter carriers make friends easily, often with customers on our routes. But sometimes the simple act of carrying mail brings us together with a good friend who lives many miles away.

Such was the case with Sioux City, IA Branch 69 member **Mike Antonovich**, who turned a simple courtesy into a lasting friendship when Rachael Stackhouse flagged him down in his LLV one day in March. Stackhouse was visiting from Indiana, and she wondered if he had postage for a package she wanted to mail to her four kids back home in Indiana.

He didn't, but Antonovich believes in the "service" part of the Postal Service, so he gave her his phone number and arranged to get postage and to go to her to pick up the package later. "Mike the Mailman," as he's known on his route, bought the postage with his own money and went to Stackhouse for the package. A gregarious and generous 35-year letter carrier, Antonovich refused

her offer to reimburse him for the small postage amount.

ment games and had worked as a water boy with his son Mikey, 23, who has special needs. As a youngster, Mikey had also participated in a Special Olympics clinic with NAIA players.

Stackhouse told Antonovich she had worked with children with special needs, and would like to meet Mikey. A few days later, Mike and Mikey found themselves courtside watching a tournament game between the Morningside College Mustangs of Sioux City, the eventual tournament champs, and Oklahoma Wesleyan. Mikey received an NAIA T-shirt and they dined in the VIP tent. Mikey was thrilled.

It could have ended there too, but everyone felt a special connection. Even after Stackhouse went home to her husband and children, all knew they had made new friends for life.

"Rachael is a blessing," Antonovich said. "God provides; that's the bottom line." He's looking forward to having Stackhouse and her family visit his family in Sioux City soon.

"It was a chance meeting that transpired into a longtime friendship," he said. "That's the beauty of being a letter carrier—the people you meet and the friends you make."

All this from a simple package and a few dollars in postage.

The story also caught the attention of *Sioux City Journal* columnist Tim Gallagher, who wrote about it for the March 17 edition.

Antonovich is a second-generation carrier—his dad, Alex Antonovich, started carrying mail in Sioux City in 1963, and Mike joined him in 1979. He understands the value of friendships to a letter carrier.

"If it wasn't for us having personal relationships with customers," Antonovich said, "the Postal Service wouldn't be where it is." **PR**



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The encounter could have ended on that kind gesture, but Antonovich and Stackhouse got to talking. She told him she was in town to referee games in the National Association of Intercollegiate Athletics (NAIA) Division II women's basketball tournament. Antonovich told her he had gone to NAIA tourna-