

The best communication comes by mail

Sometimes you communicate best when you say nothing at all—a sentiment shared by the “Best in Show” winner of the 2016 Graceful Envelope Contest. The beautifully designed and lettered envelope referenced famed mime Marcel Marceau: “It’s good to shut up sometimes,” and the Argentine proverb: “Who speaks sows; who listens reaps,” to make the point that one of the most important aspects of communicating with one another comes in listening. That has become an art that sometimes seems lost in our fast-paced, speak-from-the-hip society.

The envelope was one of more than 100 entered into the 22nd annual Graceful Envelope Contest, a celebration of the art of written correspondence sponsored by the National Association of Letter Carriers in conjunction with the Washington Calligraphers Guild. The 2016 theme, “Communication,” inspired designs about typewriters and sign language, light-houses and smoke signals, cave paintings and emoji.

Entrants from New Mexico to New South Wales, Australia, sent the envelopes through the mail stream, per the competition’s rules. The three judges looked for creative interpretation of the theme, skill in lettering and illustration, clever incorporation of postage, and effective use of color and design, among other criteria. The judges were: freelance calligrapher Sammy Little, whose clients include the U.S. Capitol, the Supreme Court and the National Gallery of Art; Special Awards calligraphy studio owner Mary Lou O’Brian of Gaithersburg, MD; and longtime NALC Designer/Web Editor Mike Shea.

The top prize was awarded to Sally Penley of Olympia, WA, for her arresting envelope. Eleven more envelopes were selected as “winners” and 14 were given the distinction of “Honorable Mention.” The judges also picked student winners from nearly 400 entries in grades 1-4, grades 5-8 and grades 9-12 youth divisions.

Some of the winning envelopes are shown on these pages and the inside back cover of this magazine. All winning and honorable mention adult entries are on display in the lobby of the NALC Headquarters building in Washington, and winning entries in all of the categories can be seen at calligraphersguild.org. Information about the 2017 contest will be published in a future issue of *The Postal Record*.



