

Getting the (good) word out



Philip
Dine

You never stop getting the word out, but recently your efforts have been notable for the variety of stories or commentaries reflecting letter carrier activities and concerns.

President Rolando once again put into context breaking news when the Postal Service released its Fiscal Year 2017 financial report in mid-November. He showed how the results demonstrate the need for some key policy changes.

Executive Vice President Brian Renfro provided to Trucks.com NALC's view on what's needed in the new vehicle fleet, given rising package deliveries and more. The story benefited from our contribution, the managing editor said—enough so, that she

plans to pursue other stories involving us.

Idaho State Association President John Paige continued his stellar work informing Idahoans through letters-to-the-editor—including in Idaho's largest newspaper, the *Idaho Statesman*, around Veterans Day—that noted the presence of thousands of military vets among carriers.

Nebraska's second-largest newspaper, the *Lincoln Journal Star*, profiled Lincoln Branch 8 letter carrier Larry Schultz, who's carried mail for a half-century plus one year and is respected, even adored, by his customers.

Meanwhile, Utah's biggest newspaper, the *Salt Lake Tribune*, went beyond its normal circulation area to write about a letter carrier in Price, a town 120 miles to the south, who'd saved a man on his route. That story was followed by another, reported and written with just as much zest and creativity, by the *Price Sun Advocate*.

I'd like to dwell on this episode for a moment.

Price Branch 2171 President Mark Montoya reached out about getting the word to the media regarding carrier Trent Hanna's actions. (He told me later that he did so to help "draw attention to the fact that we do a lot more than deliver the mail...we're vigilant, and we take care of our customers.")

We decided to divide the labor; I'd contact the Salt Lake City papers, Mark would deal with the local press. Two lengthy stories quickly followed—told in compelling narrative style, full of detail and color.

Thanks to Mark's input, each noted the value of letter carriers in the reporter's own words. *Salt Lake Tribune*: "That's the thing about letter carriers: They're in neighborhoods when others aren't." *Price Sun Advocate*: "Letter carriers nationwide make a difference thousands of times a year in all kinds of situations, from saving lives to reporting crimes."

Why the attention and care by these papers?

Let's start with the personal make-up of reporters. Though it may seem counter-intuitive to a normal person (yes, that phrasing is intentional), you give a reporter a ready-made story—about, perhaps, a local resident receiving a national award, throw in the hoopla of Washington, independent judges and prominent guests—they'll do a fine job covering it, as we witnessed recently around October's Heroes of the Year event.

But you alert them to a smaller story in real time—meaning it just happened—that no one else knows about, and they'll pounce on it with relish and enthusiasm. Then they'll keep on top of it, especially if their local carrier receives national recognition. After all, they had it first and they're personally engaged.

Moreover, because the paper wants to own it, editors take care in assigning a reporter.

In Salt Lake City, the *Tribune* reporter previously worked in Oklahoma, where she'd written about a carrier who saved an 11-year-old girl from a house fire before ending up as NALC's 2015 Western Region Hero of the Year—so she knew something about letter carriers.

In Price, the *Sun Advocate* assigned a reporter who's also a volunteer firefighter and an EMT—so he readily grasped the life-saving nature of what the carrier had done.

And the benefits transcend the incident. The paper gets to know the local branch, and this ongoing relationship benefits us when policy or legislative issues arrive that need attention.

Getting out news about letter carriers' positive deeds clearly helps our effort to shape public opinion on policy matters, where you're already changing the national conversation. It boosts the existing respect accorded carriers, and shows the value of us being on the route six or seven days a week. It makes folks even more receptive to our views on postal issues, and likelier to take action on our behalf. (Note: This changes nothing about the *Postal Record's* important Proud to Serve section, the monthly chronicling of carriers' brave or compassionate actions; rather, it's aimed at getting information quickly to the media.)

So, when letter carriers do good things, whether heroic acts or contributions to customers or neighborhoods, please let me know, so we can discuss how best to get the word out—in real time.

EDITORIAL STAFF:
Managing Editor Philip Dine
Designer/Web Editor Mike Shea
Internet Communications Coordinator
Joe Conway
Writer/Editor Rick Hodges
Editorial Assistant Jenessa Wagner

The Postal Record (ISSN 0032-5376) is published monthly by the National Association of Letter Carriers. Periodicals postage paid at Washington, DC, and at additional mailing offices.

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to Membership Department, NALC, 100 Indiana Ave. NW, Washington, DC 20001-2144.

Subscription included in membership dues. First-class subscription available for \$20 per year (contact Membership Department).

© 2017 by the National Association of Letter Carriers.

Circulation: 287,000. Union-printed using soy-based inks.

CHANGE OF ADDRESS? Contact the Membership Department.

Follow us on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and YouTube by going to NALC.org.

