

Customer Connect adds up for USPS

By touching every address in the U.S. at least six days a week, letter carriers naturally develop special relationships with all of their customers. Since USPS' Customer Connect program began in 2003, thousands of carriers have successfully leveraged their interactions with business customers to encourage them to use the Postal Service instead of relying on private delivery and mailing services. Below are some recent stories about Customer Connect leads submitted by letter carriers that have helped USPS earn new revenue.



Mike Smith (center) submitted a Customer Connect lead for a company on Oprah's Favorite Things 2017 list, Softies by Paddi Murphy. Smith is flanked by members of the Murphy family.

Softies by Paddi Murphy

Sometimes a good lead starts with simply saying yes. Last spring, the Murphys—who own a business called Softies on the route of Minneapolis Branch 9 member **Mike Smith**—invited the carrier to a catered barbecue lunch.

There, he developed a working relationship with the members of the family, Dennis, Tim and Peggy. At the lunch, the family was talking to their banker about what they needed for

their upcoming TV events. Softies sells soft women's pajamas, robes and other apparel. Smith learned about the business's new product called the "Softies Snuggler."

Plans went into effect for TV appearances on "Good Morning America," "The View" and with Oprah Winfrey on "The View" showcasing the Snuggler as one of "Oprah's Favorite Things 2017."

Smith used this lunch as an opportunity to suggest USPS Priority Mail service for Softies's shipping. "When I said I could save them lots of money, it really got their attention," Smith said. "I then informed them of getting all their Priority Mail boxes and large envelopes shipped to them for free."

The carrier further sold them by explaining how the post office has free pickups and no Saturday, Black Friday, holiday or fuel surcharges. When Smith piqued the Murphys' interest, he passed the lead onto a business development specialist. Shortly before the TV spots, pallets of USPS supplies arrived.

With each TV appearance, Softies would receive thousands of orders. The shipments soon started going out en masse. It got to be so large that the Murphys had to temporarily rent another warehouse. "On some days, I would go back to their business and fill my truck up with their Priority Mail shipments three or four times a day," Smith said. "We even sent out a two-ton truck some mornings."

Thanks to a little customer service, Smith developed a Customer Connect lead worth \$887,000 in revenue. "It all

started with a barbecue lunch," Smith said. "The Murphys had no clue what the post office could do for them. All it took was about 10 minutes explaining it to them."

Brown Shoe Fit Company

Burlington, IA Branch 222 member **Beth Schnellbacher** delivers mail daily to Brown Shoe Fit Company. The carrier had tried in the past to persuade the business to switch mailers and use USPS, but hadn't had luck.

Schnellbacher didn't give up and kept informing the owners how switching to USPS could save the company money. At first, they said they were not interested, so the carrier waited patiently. After a short time, she would approach them again on the subject. Schnellbacher finally convinced Brown Shoe Fit Company to talk to a USPS sales representative.

The carrier submitted a Customer Connect lead card, and a sales representative then contacted Brown Shoe Fit Company and helped determine, through the use of Priority Mail and First Class package



Beth Schnellbacher was recognized for her Customer Connect lead. Pictured (l to r) are NALC Customer Connect Coordinator for the Hawkeye District Michele Donnelly, Burlington, IA Branch 222 President Lori Hogberg, Schnellbacher and Hawkeye District Manager Shawneen Betha.

services, the business would be able to save a significant amount of money.

Schnellbacher's persistence led to an annualized revenue of nearly \$66,000 for USPS.

Geekified Mind

While delivering mail, Vinton, IA Branch 373 member **Kevin Higgins** noticed a new business opening on his route called Geekified Mind, a hobby and game store. The carrier introduced himself and spoke with the manager and co-owner, Andrew Sauer, about the business's mailing and shipping needs.



USPS officials presented Kevin Higgins with a certificate in recognition of his successful Customer Connect lead. Shown above (l to r) are NALC Customer Connect Coordinator for the Hawkeye District Michele Donnelly, Higgins, District Business Development Specialist Michael Hummel and Vinton Postmaster John Schlueter.

Sauer had some shipping questions and asked the carrier for advice on solutions. Higgins used this opportunity to tell Sauer about USPS mailing and shipping opportunities that may save the business money. The carrier asked if Sauer would like to talk to a USPS business specialist, to which he agreed.

Higgins submitted a Customer Connect lead card when he returned to the office. A USPS business development specialist soon contacted Geekified

Mind and scheduled a meeting. The customer was pleased with the USPS services offered, including being able to set up an online account that would enable him to print labels and postage.

Geekified Mind ships its products through various e-commerce websites and wanted something simple and cost-effective. The business has begun shipping First Class and Priority packages and scheduling carrier pick-ups.

Thanks to Higgins's willingness to welcome a new customer to the community, his lead generated \$35,000 in new estimated annualized revenue for the Postal Service.

Medical Associates

While Dubuque, IA Branch 257 President **Dan O'Hara** was delivering mail to Medical Associates, a business on his route, he made himself available to the business to answer questions. When he was in the company's mailroom, an employee of the business, Kathy, was at the postage machine and asked O'Hara the cost of mailing certain sized envelopes.

The carrier helped Kathy and took the opportunity to ask if someone from USPS, who would be able to explain their mailing options more in depth, could contact her. She agreed, and O'Hara submitted a Customer Connect lead upon returning to the office.

This simple act of listening and reacting netted the Postal Service a sale of \$89,275. O'Hara said that asking a business if they want to save money is simple and an easy part of delivering the mail.

Celebration in Philadelphia

Carriers of the William Penn Annex Post Office in Philadelphia were honored for their efforts in the Customer



Dan O'Hara (center) is congratulated for his Customer Connect lead by Hawkeye District Business Development Specialist **Michael Hummel (l)** and NALC Customer Connect Coordinator for the Hawkeye District **Michele Donnelly (r)**.

Connect Employee Engagement Program for Quarter 1 of FY 18 with sales totaling \$201,032.

Station Customer Connect Coordinator **Keith Pelzer**, a Philadelphia Branch 157 member, was presented with a certificate for his unit's accomplishments, and all were served breakfast by USPS and NALC. **PR**



Letter carriers of the William Penn Annex in Philadelphia were recognized for their efforts for the Customer Connect Employee Engagement Program. Pictured (l to r) are District Customer Connect Coordinator **James O'Malley**, Marketing Manager **Donna Graham-DiLacqua**, NALC Region 12 Regional Administrative Assistant **Leo Zachwieja**, Pelzer, Former District Manager **Chu Falling Star**, Branch 157 President **Joe Rodgers**, Philadelphia Postmaster **Mike Hernandez** and Business Development Specialists **Regina Foster-Carter** and **Mark Ferretti**.