



# A Boise back yard buzzing with bees

**“E**ver since I was a little kid, I’ve been fascinated by bees,” Boise, ID Branch 331 member **Tony Doser** says.

That buzz has continued. About two years ago, the carrier saw a photo on a Facebook page of a swarm of bees and thought, “better now than never” to start beekeeping himself.

Doser, who serves as his branch’s sergeant-at-arms and also as a shop steward, did a lot of research and trained himself. He now describes himself as “a backyard beekeeper.”

“Right now, I’ve got three separate hives—70,000 bees per hive, I

suppose,” he said of the setup in his back yard.

It’s also a family affair. His retired father watches the bees, and Doser has passed on his love of all things apian to his 4-year-old daughter. “She loves checking on them with me,” he said. “She knows how it all works.”

The carrier said that once you get going, the art of beekeeping doesn’t require a whole lot of work. “As long as you have the equipment,” Doser said, “bees pretty much take care of themselves,” especially during wintertime.

But come May and June, bees start swarming. “During the summertime, I check on them once every three weeks,” he said, “making sure the queen is laying eggs properly, making sure mites aren’t getting in the hives.”

A backyard garden helps the bees while also benefiting from their presence. Doser has planted lots of bee-friendly flowers so that bees can get nectar.

“My family has always been into gardening, and with the bees on the

property, it’s grown tenfold because of the pollination,” he said. “If there are any small-time gardeners out there, throw a beehive in there and you’d be surprised.”

As a letter carrier for the past five years, Doser is out in the community every day, of course, and people have begun to know him as the bee guy.

“He’s a really wonderful guy,” Branch 331 President **Russ Bright** said. “He has put out the word that, if someone complains about a bee problem, let him know. He’ll go after work, capture the queen and relocate them.”

Doser says that catching the swarms in the neighborhoods is fun for him—and he’s always prepared. “All summer long, I have the tools and equipment in my car,” he said.

That kit includes a cardboard box, pruners and a sugar water spray that is used to coat the bees. It gets the insects’ wings sticky so they can’t fly away. It doesn’t hurt them; instead it incapacitates the bees just long enough to collect them.



Opposite page:  
Tony Doser checks  
on his bees.



Beehives sit in  
Doser's backyard.



"I shake the bees out of the tree and get them into the box," Doser said. From there, the carrier adds to his own hives.

Doser likes teaching others about bees, especially youngsters. "If there are kids, it's fun," he said. "They'll want to come out" and watch.

When bees are swarming, people tend to get scared. Doser says he takes his bare hand and sticks it in the middle of the hive so he can show onlookers that there's no need to worry. "When they're swarming, they have full bellies," he tells customers. "Let 'em do their thing."

"If you see swarms, call the local fire department instead of an exterminator," he added. "They have professionals they can call."

As many probably have heard in the past decade, bees are in danger due to colony collapse disorder, the sudden disappearance of most worker bees in a colony. There have been losses of 30 to 90 percent of bee colonies, which results in a shortage of bees available to pollinate crops. Pesticide exposure has been cited as one possible cause.

Because of this, beekeeping as a hobby has sprung up all over the country—in back yards, rooftops and gardens. "I'm just trying to do my part," Doser said. In addition, he noted, "More people are taking the initiative to use less harmful chemicals that have a negative effect."

Boise officials are aware of the carrier's beekeeping, and he has made

sure that the city doesn't spray for mosquitoes near his home.

For anyone interested in starting a backyard beehive, Doser's advice is simple: research. "There are quite a few podcasts out there," he said. "There's a ton of information. A lot of people make their own hives."

The carrier said he's not involved in beekeeping for commercial reasons. "I'm in it for the hobby, not the money," Doser said. "I just like doing it."

And, naturally, his hobby produces a sweet reward. Homemade honey is usually his contribution to his branch barbecues. "I harvest a little honey for my friends," he said. "It tastes different than what you can get in stores." **PR**

## A special post office tour

**P**hillip Black has made friends on his route in Henryetta, OK, but none as special as Jayden.

"He would be sitting on the front porch," Black said. "The next thing you know he starts looking for me, and I'd always make an effort to look for him."

Jayden Peavler, a 9-year-old who uses a wheelchair, loved to receive mail from Black each day. Soon, Jayden's aunt, who cares for him at his home, began mailing letters to Jayden so he could get mail with his name on it.

Last August, Black, an 18-year letter carrier and steward for Muskogee, OK Branch 1042, arranged with his postmaster to give Jayden a thrill by taking him on a special tour of the

post office with the help of his fellow letter carriers.

"We took him around and showed him all the steps that a letter takes to get to somebody's house," Black said. Jayden met the other letter carriers and postal employees at the post office and received a sheet of Total Eclipse of the Sun stamps, which are printed with special heat-sensitive ink that changes color when touched to reveal an underlying image of the moon.

Black says his caring actions say little about him but much about Jayden. "I'm nothing special," he said. "If anyone else had seen this little boy and the way he lights up the room, they would have jumped at the chance. He's just a great kid." **PR**



Phillip Black (r) and other carriers with Jayden Peavler (c) while the youngster took a tour of the post office.