

Photos from around the country (from top): A letter carrier in Austin, TX; some young patrons thank their carrier with sidewalk chalk in Oklahoma City; and a humorous note for a carrier in Lehigh Valley, PA.



# Essential service in uncertain times



**L**etter carriers have a long history of serving the United States in times of crisis. Even in normal times, we are called to service simply by doing our jobs, binding the nation together as we deliver vital documents, prescription medications and supplies to people with limited access to the outside world. Our mission becomes all the more important when a crisis confronts the public.

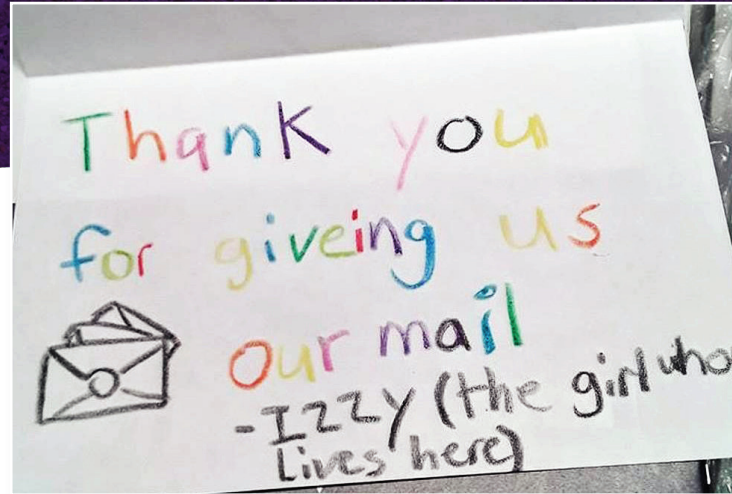
Our service in difficult times transcends the delivery of mail. By delivering our routes, we bring a sense of normalcy and stability to anxious customers. And by doing our jobs even as we struggle with the same challenges facing the people we serve, letter carriers become an inspiration, one delivery at a time.

We have served this way through many crises and disasters. Fear and uncertainty have gripped the public before, and letter carriers have responded. After the terrorist attacks of Sept. 11, 2001 and the subsequent anthrax attacks, after the Houston area suffered the worst flooding in U.S. history two-and-a-half years ago, after numerous power blackouts, hurricanes, tornadoes or wildfires left residents isolated, anxious and in need of a link to the outside world, letter carriers have stepped in to bring vital service and a steady presence.

Now, we are providing connection, reassurance and inspiration to communities across the country as the coronavirus pandemic affects people in every state in the union.



A letter carrier in West Michigan received this note from one young customer.



The unique nature of this crisis, with many tens of millions of people in isolation or even quarantined at their homes, makes our role particularly important. Across the country, Americans have become disconnected for an extended time from jobs, from businesses they rely on and from friends and family. Now more than ever, they depend on the Postal Service for connections to each other and to the outside world.

We are providing many people with prescription and over-the-counter medications and important documents, as we always do. We also are delivering additional vital supplies that many of our customers would leave their homes to buy in stores in normal circumstances, but cannot because of supply shortages, orders to shelter in place or health concerns. The Postal Service will deliver checks to many households as part of the nationwide economic stimulus and relief law—the largest in U.S. history—that Congress passed, and the president signed into law, in response to the economic impact of the pandemic.

In the midst of the crisis, letter carriers are being called upon to keep our democracy functioning. The U.S. Census Bureau is busy conducting the ten-year census, which includes mail to and from millions of households. Primary elections for the upcoming presidential and congressional elections will also rely heavily on the mail, more than ever before—millions of voters will cast their votes by mail, and more states are switching rapidly to vote-by-mail or considering the option (see story on page 14). As we play this essential role, we perform an unspoken service, helping to soothe the anxious feelings of many. Whether they see us in our uniforms and trucks on the street or

simply see the mail in their mailboxes, our customers feel a connection to the rest of the world and for some, hope for the future.

“The power of simply being there—of showing the public that someone they rely on is getting the job done—should not be underestimated,” NALC President Fredric Rolando said. “When Americans see letter carriers and the daily mail, it offers a measure of reassurance in these unprecedented times that the nation continues to function.”

The public we serve understands that as we demonstrate the daily resolve of the nation, we are struggling with the same inconveniences and anxieties that everyone else is facing.

“Like other Americans, letter carriers must also protect our health, manage our fears and tend to family members at home during this crisis,” Rolando said. “That is what makes our efforts to deliver the mail truly heroic.”

And Americans everywhere are expressing their thanks. In newspapers, on social media and even with handmade signs, their messages of gratitude and encouragement have reached individual letter carriers and sometimes made news. Just as they show their appreciation for others who are giving extra effort in this crisis for the benefit of all—from healthcare workers to police officers and firefighters to grocery store employees—people also are giving thanks to postal employees for their dedication.

Here, *The Postal Record* brings you some examples of public recognition and support for the service that letter carriers are providing in uncertain times.

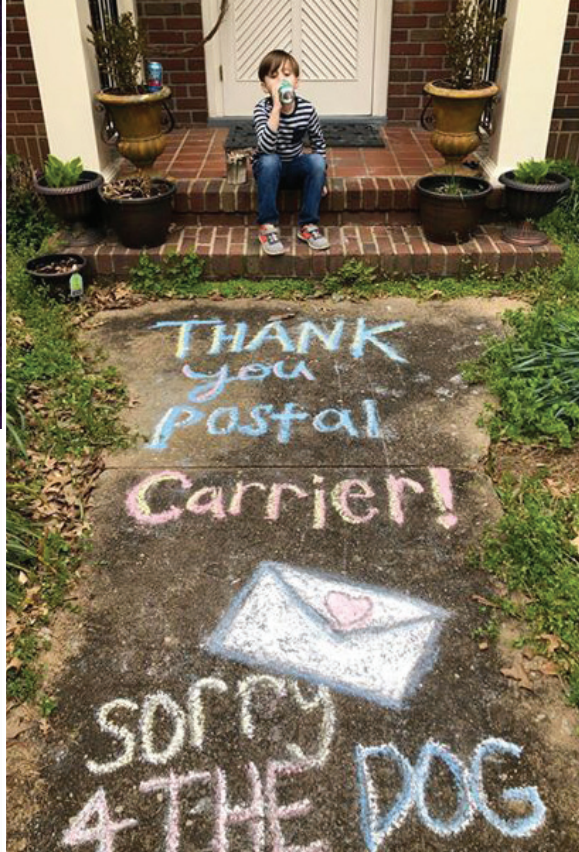
A family in High Point, NC, is writing regular inspirational messages in chalk on the walk leading to their mailbox, reported Greensboro, NC, news outlet WFMY. “Thank you postal carrier,” one message read. “Sorry 4 the dog.”

In Indiana, an anonymous chalkster went to the post office to thank local postal employees. “Thanks for taking care of our mail,” read the message written with green chalk on the sidewalk outside the Topeka, IN, Post Office. The postmaster discovered the anonymous message of thanks when he went outside to sanitize the front door handles, reported the local newspaper, the *Goshen News*.

In nearby South Bend, IN, a letter carrier’s sister is leaving “goody bags” containing essential supplies such as tissues, hand sanitizer, wipes and gloves, along with notes of encouragement and thanks, for her letter carrier, South Bend’s ABC 57 news channel reported. The woman has urged others in her neighborhood to do the same through social media.

Members of a social group for teens with autism in the Dallas-Fort Worth area made “Thank You Boxes” for letter carriers and other delivery services, news channel NBC 5 of North Texas reported. The teens are placing boxes outside their front doors filled with bottles of water and snacks for carriers as a token of appreciation.





The note for one letter carrier in Greensboro, NC.

In New York, Boston and other cities and small towns, residents have organized a collective cheer to thank heroes, including postal employees, who are working during the crisis. The cheer is modeled on an event that began in European countries locked down by the coronavirus crisis and has spread to communities worldwide. From their windows and front porches at the appointed time, residents clap and cheer all at once, hoping to make enough noise to be heard by those they appreciate. Participants are using #ClapBecauseWeCare on social media to spread the idea.

Even the United Nations has noticed. UNI Global Union, the worldwide federation of postal unions, issued a joint statement with the Universal Postal Union (UPU), the United Nations agency representing the postal sector, about the crisis. "The UPU and UNI Global Union thank all postal operators, postal unions and postal workers globally for their dedication and engagement to keeping the postal network running in times of crisis," the statement said. "We firmly believe we will emerge from this pandemic stronger and more resilient, while proudly delivering on our mandates to serve the world's peoples."

ful for his service—even at a distance, he says. "They're all just happy to see me because they appreciate the smile I bring to them," Grant told the Fox/ABC/CBS affiliate, "and they always say I make their day, which is a good thing for me because I like to see them happy."

Grant told WGGB that the most important thing he can do is to keep smiling. "I think it's a better time than ever at this moment with so many people stressed out, not being able to pay their bills or go to work and to see someone come smiling, bringing them their mail," he said. "I think it's the best thing that a letter carrier can do at this moment."

Meanwhile, newspapers, in editorials, columns and letters to the editor from residents, have joined in spreading the praise.

"Just a quick shout-out to all those in our community who are working so hard to maintain the many 'little things' we've too long taken for granted. Grocers restocking shelves around the clock. U.S. Postal Service carriers delivering mail each afternoon," a reader wrote in a letter to the Park City, UT, *Park Record*. "Thank you. Your diligence nudges fear towards faith."

The Western Mass News channel (WGGB-TV) of Springfield, MA, profiled Springfield Branch 46 member **Harrison Grant**, whose famous smile is a welcome sight to his customers these days in Longmeadow, where he has carried mail for 33 years.

Everyone he delivers to is at home and grate-

"I want to give a huge shout-out to all the postal carriers, and I hope that the public will give their carriers a thank you soon," a reader wrote to the *South Bend Tribune* of South Bend, IN. "The Postal Service is there through all conditions and this time is more trying for everyone."

"Kudos to the postal workers, who are processing and delivering mail, medicines and supplies to every U.S. household during this pandemic," a reader wrote in a letter to the Long Island, NY news outlet *newsday.com*.

A columnist for the Longmont, CO *Times-Call* newspaper singled out letter carriers for special thanks for serving despite the stress of the times. "The fact that they keep going and provide our readers and residents with essential news and packages makes this situation a whole lot more manageable," he wrote.

"The United States Postal Service and that promise of mail delivery through rain, sleet, snow, and now... add global pandemic to the list," wrote a columnist for *spectrumnews.com* of Western New York. "Thank you for working so hard."

"I would like to take this opportunity to thank postal employees for all their hard work in delivering mail and packages during this pandemic. They come to work every day and do their job delivering packages, medicines, letters, etc.," a reader wrote in a letter to the *Daily Freeman* of Kingston, NY. "We should all be grateful for the excellent job the U.S. Postal Service is doing."

Citing postal employees along with healthcare workers and others, the *Rio Rancho Observer* thanked essential workers of all stripes for their service. "Too many of you have been underappreciated for too long," the New Mexico newspaper's editors wrote.



Right: A chalk message written outside a post office in Topeka, KS

Below: A carrier in Garden Grove, CA, shows off the thank you card he received.



“Thank you for playing essential roles, even before now. We hope no one, including you, ever again doubts how much of a difference you make.”

People are also flooding social media with messages—including photos, artwork and videos—of support and gratitude for postal employees and other essential workers. A sample of messages posted on Twitter:

“To every U.S. postal worker— thank you for continuing to sort and deliver our mail and packages!” – Wendy Mills, reporter for Western New York news channel Spectrum News

“Our postal workers are vital to deliver supplies and keep the economy going during this pandemic.” – Arriadna

“Think of the people who do leave home every day to run the stores, factories, and warehouses on which we rely to live. Think of the postal workers who sort and deliver your mail, the sanitation workers who clean our cities, the outreach teams helping the homeless and hungry.” – Ali Velshi, television host

“To the supermarket employees, postal workers, delivery truck drivers, and all of the doctors, nurses and medical professionals, *thank you* for helping us make it through this difficult time as best we can. We appreciate you!” – U.S. Rep. Mike Levin (D-CA)

“Be kind to your postal worker, nurse, bus driver, delivery guy, grocery clerk. They’re heroes.” – Zac Petkanas

Letter carriers have taken to the media as well to offer words of support to their communities.

Former Idaho State Association President **John Paige** wrote the *Twin Falls News-Times* in support of carriers. “I would especially like to thank the letter carriers of the U.S. Postal Service. Many of them are military veter-

ans who are serving the people of the United States a second time, delivering the mail during this epidemic.”

In a letter to the Hamilton County, IN, *Times*, Carmel, IN Branch 888 President **Ronnie Roush** told the community that letter carriers will continue to serve, and he asked for support in return.

“We take great pride in serving our communities and we gladly accept our jobs being deemed ‘mission critical’ where we will be working everyday throughout this pandemic,” Roush wrote. “We strive to give you a sense of normalcy and hope you enjoy seeing your letter carrier or the white trucks with the Eagle on the side in every neighborhood six and seven days a week. Now is the time to stay at home and allow us to bring much needed supplies to your front door.”

“I just want to thank all of our hard working Montanans,” including medical professionals and delivery personnel, Montana State Association President and Great Falls, MT Branch 650 member **Julie Quilliam** wrote in a letter to the Great Falls *Tribune*. “The letter carriers of Montana are out delivering a sense of normalcy six days a week in these uncertain times.”

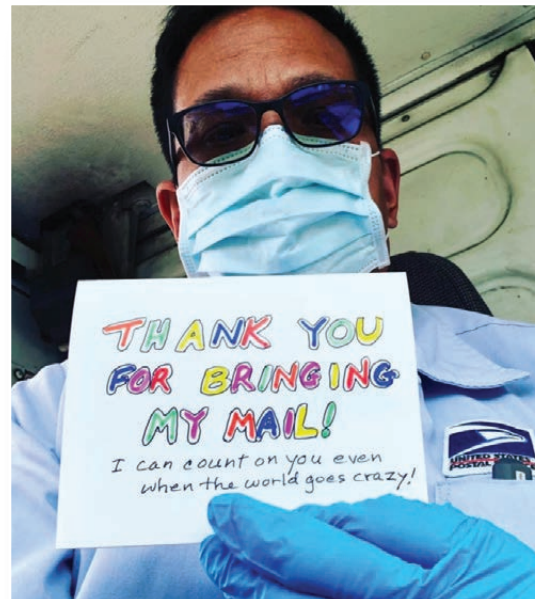
**Alan Ashley**, an Ann Arbor, MI Branch 434 member who has carried mail in Ann Arbor for 26 years, demonstrated the spirit of confidence and the inspiration of letter carriers when he wrote a column on the Chelsea, MI, news site *chelseaupdate.com*.

“The USPS was the only government agency open for business the day after the 9/11 attacks. The USPS has continued delivering mail and packages through 9/11, anthrax threats, the 2003 East Coast blackout, and other national incidents,” Ashley wrote.

“Letter carriers will continue to

deliver through anything else in the future. So there’s no need to worry about the mail stopping,” he wrote. “Remember our motto of ‘neither rain, nor snow, or sleet.’ ”

Reflecting on the challenges every family, including his own, faces in these times, Ashley offered words of encouragement: “As long as everyone continues to wash their hands, practice social distancing, and helping those in need, we will get through this crisis.”



Working as a letter carrier may be trying these days, President Rolando said, but our union, our fellow carriers and our customers are all on the same side.

“The people we serve day in and day out understand that we may have to make changes to our service and how we work during this time,” Rolando said, “and I think most understand and appreciate that. They are cheering us as we do our essential work.”

For updates on the evolving situation, go to [nalc.org](http://nalc.org). **PR**