

What's happening on social media

Various news stories and interesting anecdotes that celebrate letter carriers and the mail have been flying around social media. We plan to collect the best ones in this space. If you come across a story you'd like us to consider featuring, send it to social@nalc.org.

Carrier earns rare honor after 2 million miles of safe driving

In his 45-year postal career, Louisville, KY Branch 14 member **Rick Evans** has achieved a rare feat: traversing 2 million miles safely delivering mail to families and businesses without an accident.

In late May, work at his downtown Louisville post office stopped one



Rick Evans of Louisville, KY Branch 14 (front l) was recognized in May for his 2 million miles of safe driving.

morning to celebrate his achievement.

"I've been in the post office 26 years. This is the first one that I've been involved in," Louisville's acting postmaster Chris Carroll told Kentucky's Spectrum News 1 about the carrier's award.

Along with the carrier's proud co-workers, many regional managers said they needed to make the trip to honor Evans. They also had not seen a carrier achieve such a long, spotless driving record.

Evans didn't want all of the attention, but he thanked his co-workers and supervisors.

"You're blessed to make friends," he told Spectrum News 1. "I mean, you have concern for the people, that they receive the things that they want to receive, and you take it seriously when they don't."

Fellow Branch 14 member **Audrey Harrod** has known Evans for all of her 16-year USPS career. "We're just lucky to have people like Rick here, and hopefully lots of us get to stick around that long, you know, and not have accidents," she told the news station.

Though carriers in the area get to choose their routes based on seniority, Evans picked a ZIP code with some of the busiest streets and businesses in downtown with near-constant construction. Despite this, Evans has maintained an unblemished safety record.

He told the television station that the same thing that's kept him a model employee can make us better people: "If we can be in the moment and share the eye contact, share the moment with the people, and make decisions in the moment, we'll all be safe. We'll all have better relationships. Those are the things that count."

Lifting spirits through postcards

After her retirement as a children's librarian, a Minnesota woman wanted a new project to concentrate on.

Mary Steinbicker has loved postcards since her childhood travels—even asking her own wedding guests



Minnesota resident Mary Steinbicker carried out a pandemic project to send postcards every day in 2020 to friends and strangers alike to spread kindness and cheer through the mail.

to bring postcards in lieu of gifts—so she came up with a New Year's resolution in January 2020: She'd send out one each day the entire year to spread kindness and cheer through the mail.

She had an abundance of postcards already, as her affinity for them is well known. Being a librarian, she was organized in her approach and kept a list of every recipient to prevent multiple cards from being sent to the same person.

Steinbicker sent postcards to her large family, members of her church congregation and friends from the library, but also to people she'd never met, including musicians in the Minnesota Orchestra, a newspaper editor, and Minnesota Gov. Tim Walz as well as other elected officials.

She'd start her missive with: "Dear Recipient, You are No. 138 in my Postcard Project." Then she'd include a message tailored to the person, along with a disclaimer that she was not at the postcard's depicted location, due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The woman especially wanted youngsters who grew up in the internet age to experience mail as a source of joy, and as something that's much more than bills and ads. "You should

Social media (continued)



Bob Criss of Pittsburgh, PA Branch 84 received a retirement party from his customers on his route in April.

be excited when the mail comes,” Steinbicker told Minneapolis’s *Star Tribune*.

On Jan. 1, 2020, the project officially was kicked off when she sent the first postcard to a former co-worker’s 9-year-old son; she has helped him learn cursive through their communication.

Longtime friend Kay Christianson was excited to receive Postcard No. 174 from Steinbicker. “When you get a postcard in the mail, it’s the first thing I look at because there’s some adventure or story of some kind that’s greeting you,” Christianson told the *Star Tribune*. “Usually it’s someone who’s traveling, but in this case it wasn’t, so there was another story to be told.”

Steinbicker hopes that even though a postcard is small, it can have a significant impact. “How do we maintain a relationship when we’re not together? How do we maintain the sense of community when you’re afraid to walk up to somebody?” she told the newspaper. “I’d like to think I did a little

bit in maintaining those connections, so that people wouldn’t feel so isolated. It certainly made me not feel so isolated.”

Steinbicker’s project was so well received that it lives on in 2021 in a more occasional form, telling the USPS Link that she calls it her “Intermittent Postcard Project.”

“Thank all your letter carriers,” she told the publication. “Tell them I couldn’t have done it without the Post Office.”

Pennsylvania carrier receives warm sendoff from grateful customers

Patrons on the route of Pittsburgh, PA Branch 84 member **Bob Criss** decided to surprise him on his final day of deliveries on April 29, even though it was a rainy one.

Unbeknownst to the carrier, a few days earlier, the Gorman family had printed and distributed a flyer that read, in part: “Bob is an amazing guy, who always has a smile, a friendly wave and a kind word. He’s gotten to know so many families and watched their children grow up. If you’ve never had the pleasure of a conversation with him then take a moment to say hello before it’s too late.”

Included with the note was an orange balloon for each house to blow up and attach to the mailbox, as well as a postcard to send Criss well wishes.

As “Mailman Bob,” as the neighborhood kids call him, pulled up that day, he gave pause as he saw all of his smiling—and some crying—customers, as well as banners and balloons. He

was even given a cake that read “Best Mailman Ever.”

“He was very moved, and it made us happy,” customer Jim Krally told the *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*.

“Oh man, they got me going,” Criss told the newspaper, adding that he had recorded some of the signs on his phone as “a little remembrance” and is keeping the pile of postcards.

The carrier had delivered on the route for about six or seven years of his career, but he joked that people on his former routes still want him back. “I have a tendency to say hi to everyone,” he told the *Post-Gazette*.

Criss told the paper that in retirement, he plans to take care of his father-in-law, who’s moving in with him and his wife, Kim; to tackle his honey-do list; and to take Kim to a winery on the weekends. They raised two now-adult children, Tyler and Emily, who he said “were always supportive of my career and understood that I had to work on Saturdays, as well as a few Christmas days.”

Criss doesn’t know why his patrons gave him such a sweet sendoff, but he feels the same about them.

“Felt like family,” he told the newspaper, adding to his patrons, “Thank you very much for all you’ve done for me.”

The Traveling Diary helps connect women by mail

In April 2020, a New Jersey woman thought that keeping a diary during the COVID-19 pandemic might help her sort through her feelings. Kyra Peralte wrote about the challenges of balancing work, marriage and motherhood during a global crisis.

Peralte was curious about how other women in her situation were coping. She

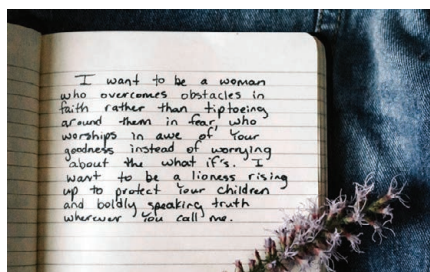
craved connection, so soon after, she made the decision to drop her journal in the mail to share it with a stranger.

She had invited other women from around the globe to fill the remaining pages of her composition notebook with their own stories of life during the pandemic.

“I wanted an interaction that felt human, and it feels very human to read someone else’s writing,” Peralte told *The Washington Post*.

She explained to the newspaper that she had dreamed up “The Traveling Diary,” which would be a simple notebook that would travel by mail and collect handwritten stories with the ultimate goal of creating a community.

A year later, seven notebooks have traveled from North America to Australia to Africa. A growing group



Through her website (top), New Jersey resident Kyra Peralte sends notebooks (above) to women around the world for a project called “The Traveling Diary” to help them sort through their feelings during the COVID-19 pandemic.

of people—115 and counting—have signed up for a turn with a notebook.

Peralte found the first willing participant on a Zoom conference for entrepreneurs, during which she mentioned the traveling diary. Following that, a woman from North Carolina contacted Peralte and said she would like to share her tale next.

In May, Peralte posted an article she wrote on Medium, an online publishing platform, titled “Why I’m collecting stories from different women in a traveling diary” to recruit more participants to contribute.

Word spread, and she created a website, thetravelingdiarytour.com, so women could sign up.

Each person has a three-day limit and is allowed to fill the notebook with as many pages of writing or art as she wants, before mailing it to the next person in the queue.

“Everyone approaches the blank pages in their own personal way,” Peralte told *The Washington Post*.

Women from different cultures, races and lifestyles shared their experiences during the ongoing pandemic, capturing the moment they were written. Some stories were about heartbreak or ongoing protests, and other women wrote about joyous occasions or in ways that celebrated their families.

Peralte now has her original notebook back, while the other six are still circulating the globe.

“It was beautiful to have it again and to read it,” she told the paper.

She loves that she feels a strong bond with women who have shared their experiences, women whom she otherwise never would have met. “The Traveling Diary is making sisters out of strangers,” she added.

New York carrier retires with much fanfare from her devoted patrons

Dozens of customers on Oneonta, NY Branch 97 member **Mary Brower’s** route celebrated her retirement on April 30 with posters, banners, balloons, flowers and lots of well wishes.

“She’s going to be missed in this neighborhood,” customer Fred Gerowe told Oneonta’s *The Daily Star*. “Whoever takes over this route is going to have some big shoes to fill.”

Brower had delivered mail on the route for seven years, walking at least 10 miles a day. (Prior to going to Oneonta full time, Brower worked for 16 years as a carrier part time out of Deposit, NY.)

She was touched by her patrons’ reaction to her retirement.

“They’re all just the nicest people,” Brower told *The Daily Star*. “I told them I’ll come by every week and I’ll actually have time to visit with them.”

Customer Jodie Gerowe loves the fact that Brower remembered so much about the people she delivered to. “Mary knows the name of everyone on her route, their kids, their grandkids and their pets,” she told the newspaper. “If she knows you’re waiting for a package, she’ll come running to give it to you.”

Another resident, Erica LaBuz, praised his carrier’s affable personality: “She’s just so kind and fun to chat with,” LaBuz told *The Daily Star*. “She always makes time for everyone. She has a big route, so she could say ‘No, I’m busy,’ but she never does.”

Brower said that in retirement she’s looking forward to taking the time to learn Spanish and sign language, play music and spend time doing ministry.

“I think I’m going to spend my first month or two writing everyone thank-you notes,” Brower told the paper. **PR**