

## Letter carriers and the mail on social media

**V**arious news stories and interesting anecdotes that celebrate letter carriers and the mail have been appearing on social media. The following are some that have come to the union's attention. If you come across a story you'd like us to consider featuring, send it to [social@nalc.org](mailto:social@nalc.org).

### Iowa letter carrier retires after 38 years of service

On Nov. 18, 2022, Washington, IA, letter carrier **Dan Schulte** retired after 38 years with the Postal Service.

The Cedar Rapids Branch 373 member, who has delivered on the same route in the same truck since 1989, noted that while his own career was consistent, the world had changed drastically around him.

Only 10 of the residents on Schulte's route have stuck around since his first day. "A lot of those people that were younger then, they were in their house nearly 35 years, and then they've moved on. It's a slow transition. A lot of them pass away over the years and stuff, and I won't say that's tough like a family member, but it's sad. You see a different angle of it," he told the *Southeast Iowa Union*.

Though the social interactions dwindled over the years, Schulte said they were still present, and he would miss them.

However, Schulte expressed a readiness to retire as the job, though rewarding, was more taxing than it looked. "There's a lot to keep straight. We don't really just match addresses, we match people. I knew where you lived as soon as you sent me your name," he told the *Union*.

Schulte, whose three daughters will all complete their education in the spring, plans to spend retirement with his family and on his farm, which he has run concurrently with his postal career.

### Community celebrates Wisconsin carrier's retirement

Wauwatosa, WI, letter carrier **Jeff Hagen** delivered his route for the last time in early December.

"I've been crying all morning. You know, I'm a grown man, I'm almost 60; I'm a grown man, and I'm going, 'This is unbelievable,'" the Milwaukee Branch 2 member told the local ABC television affiliate.

As a send-off, Hagen's community threw him a surprise party, showering him with gifts and kind words.

Resident Trish Ricci said, "He is like the lifeblood of this little community. He walks around with treats for the kids and the dogs, and always makes sure your package is in your mail. He's so

Jeff Hagen gets a hug from a grateful customer.



humble; he doesn't even realize how wonderful he is to us."

Hagen said that he won't miss the "hot, sticky days" of summer or walking on ice in the winter, but he will miss the community. He plans to spend retirement making memories with his grandchildren.

### California letter carrier retires after 38 years

On Nov. 29, 2022, Madera, CA, letter carrier **Javier Alcala** retired after 38 years with the Postal Service.

Throughout the decades, the Central California Branch 231 member has reached several milestones in his career—one being the Million Mile Award. This means that Alcala has reached 1 million miles on his route without even the most minor accident.

Alcala says that he will miss his co-workers, whom he describes as family. He notes that they threw him a party when he became a U.S. citizen in 1985. "They are not just co-workers; they became like family members to me.



Photo courtesy Kalen McCain/Southeast Iowa Union  
[southeastiowaunion.com](http://southeastiowaunion.com)

Dan Schulte





Viv Woodland holds a 101-year-old postcard addressed to the house behind her. The card was sent to Holland L. Smith, pictured below from the 1924 Brattleboro High School yearbook.

Photos by Kevin O'Connor/VTDigger.org

We went through good times and some bad times,” he told *Your Central Valley*.

Alcala is also grateful for the job, crediting it for his ability to pay off his home and help with his daughters’ college educations.

Looking ahead to retirement, Alcala plans to travel with his friends and family, even considering taking an R.V. tour across the United States.

## Postcard makes 101-year journey

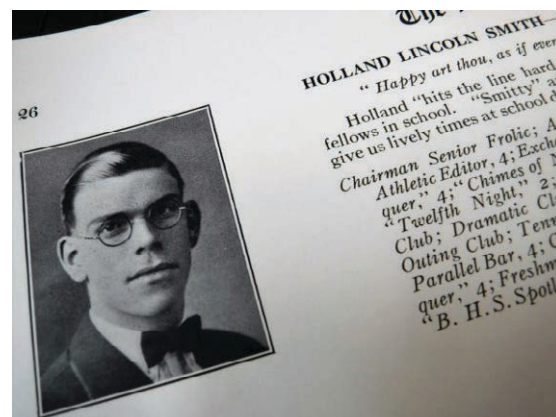
In November 2022, a postcard mailed long, long ago finally finished its journey with the help of Brattleboro, VT, letter carrier **Viv Woodland**. When she first attempted delivery, the Branch 37 member noticed that the postcard was faded and yellowed, and it seemed to have been mailed in ’21—not 2021, as she initially thought, but 1921.

The postcard, which bore a 1-cent stamp, was addressed from “Lena” in

California to her relative, a Holland L. Smith in Vermont. Lena wrote to Smith to ask if he wanted to pick oranges, and to describe the beautiful weather in California.

Prior to the century-old postcard, Smith was noteworthy—he served in the Navy during World War II and worked as a sportscaster, a newspaper correspondent, a teacher and a track coach, and he also served as a Burlington High School principal, assistant superintendent of local schools and a member of the Burlington City Council. When he died in 2000 at age 94, the *Burlington Free Press* dubbed him “Mr. Everything.”

“Generally, an undeliverable postcard with no return address such as this would be sent to the ‘dead letter’



facility, but I wanted to give this piece of quotidian history a chance,” Woodland told the *Vermont Digger*.

Eventually, after some sleuthing, Woodland discovered that Smith’s four children live in Vermont. She mailed it to the oldest child, who is 90, and left them with a beautiful Thanksgiving memory, all thanks to a dedicated letter carrier.



## Social media (continued)

### Pennsylvania carrier celebrated after 35 years of service

On Dec. 30, 2022, after 35 years with the Postal Service, **Cary Zuckero** retired.

The Branch 17 member, affectionately known as “Tex the mailman” in his neighborhood, delivered in downtown Scranton, PA, including to the NBC affiliate in the area, WBRE.



Cary Zuckero

To celebrate Zuckero’s lengthy career with the Postal Service, a small celebration was held at the Ritz Theatre, complete

with a postal-themed cake designed to look like a letter. The marquee was decorated with a farewell message.

Zuckero told WYOU, the local CBS affiliate, that he plans to spend his retirement playing guitar and making music, a lifelong hobby of his.

### Virginia carrier retires after 18 years

After 18 years with the Postal Service, **Freddie B. Manning Sr.** wanted to stay another two. However, life had different plans for the Suffolk, VA, letter carrier. When he and his family decided to move to Charleston, SC, Manning figured that an early retirement was the best option.

The Suffolk Branch 1112 member worked a number of positions with the Postal Service—a letter carrier, a safety captain, a trainer, an on-the-job instructor and a mentor. He also served in the Navy for 22 years.

As a letter carrier, Manning made quite the impression on his custom-



Freddie B. Manning Sr.

ers. “This is actually my fourth route that I’ve been on, and on all three routes that I’ve been on before, people still talk about me,” he told the *Suffolk News-Herald*. “In this new route I’m on now for the last seven years, people still love me out there, they know me by name. This one lady told me, ‘You’re the first mailman I know by name.’ That’s saying something. So I was pretty impressed with that.

“All the people that I ran into and encountered throughout my whole time in the post office, I really appreciate them. And they appreciate me,” Manning said, reflecting on his time as a letter carrier. “I’ve gained a lot of friends out there.”

### Florida carrier featured in children’s book

Orlando, FL, letter carrier **Dennis Winston** goes above and beyond for his customers, and one customer decided to recognize Winston in a book. The Central Florida Branch 1091 member has worked at the Postal Service for 20 years and often comes to the aid of those he serves.

Customer Nina Vu explained that “he’s tall, so sometimes I’ll ask him to do a couple things for me. I had Christmas lights that I couldn’t reach and he

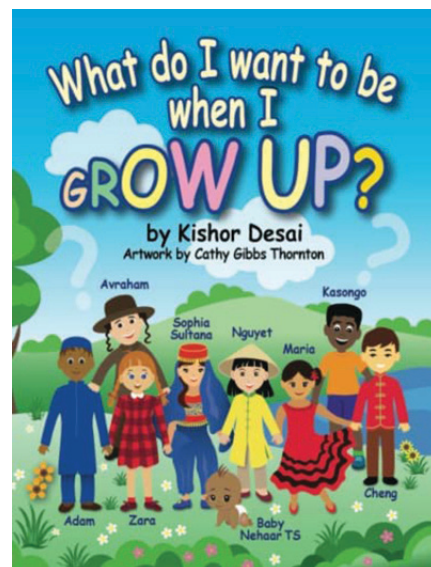
quickly got them down for me, very nice.” Another customer, Sara Jiminez, took to social media to call Winston “the best mailman in the whole world” on his birthday.

But that’s nothing in comparison to what happened recently—one customer, Kishor Desai, opted to include an illustration of Winston as a letter carrier in his children’s book, *What Do I Want to Be When I Grow Up?*

“I’m delivering his mail one day and he said he had something for me and he hands a book to me. Then tells me to turn to a specific page and there I am,” Winston told WKMG-TV, the local CBS affiliate. “I’m super humbled. Nothing like that has ever happened to me.

“I love what I do,” Winston said. “Not many people can say they love their job. The person that loves what they do, it’s not work.”

Unfortunately, Winston will soon be undergoing surgery to repair torn ligaments in his ankle. Though he is used to ankle sprains, having experi-



enced them often during his time in the Army, he's still thinking about the customers he serves.

"A lot of these people are like family and friends. I've been doing the same route for nine years and you build a rapport with people," he said. "I let all my Colonialtown people know and they sent me their best wishes. Hopefully, I'll be back. We'll see how the recovery goes."

### Beloved Washington carrier retires after 38 years



On Christmas Eve of 2022, Seattle, WA, carrier **Calvin Clark** retired after 38 years with the Postal Service. His customers spent his last few weeks of work giving him

well wishes. The Branch 79 member especially appreciated the yard signs that popped up over that period, congratulating him on his retirement and thanking him for his service.

The 62-year-old carrier delivered mail up a steep hill to about 400 residents, despite enduring several injuries throughout his career. Nevertheless, Clark loved the job. He spent the last four decades getting to know pretty much everything there is to know about the neighborhood and its residents. He watched businesses open and close, attended neighborhood block parties and paid his respects at the funerals of his customers.

"I love the people up here, and I appreciate everything they've done for

me and hope the best for everyone," Clark told *The Seattle Times*.

The love wasn't one-sided—customers often offered Clark cookies or water on hot days, and one family who lived at the top of a very high set of stairs even installed a gate with a plaque reading "Calvin's gate" so Clark could avoid a long trek between their house and their neighbor's house.

Dan Knodle, a resident of the Queen Anne neighborhood, said that Clark was his letter carrier for 15 years until Clark's route changed. Knodle organized a fundraiser for his retirement, which topped \$5,000. "It just goes to show how many people he touched on a daily basis," Knodle said.

Clark plans to spend his retirement enjoying time with his wife—and sleeping in. "I do know the first thing I won't do is hit my alarm at 3:30 a.m.," he said.

### California carrier to retire after three decades of service

St. Helena, CA, letter carrier **Gordie Adams** is retiring in February after 34 years with the Postal Service. But first, the Santa Rosa Branch 183 member is planning on doing a farewell tour of each of the city's mail routes. Adams started out as a "swing carrier," delivering to all of St. Helena's mail routes, and he doesn't want to leave without saying goodbye. He's made quite the positive impression on his neighborhood; he also has made numerous friends and even met his wife on his route.

"I could very easily walk past people and continue on my route, but I like knowing about them," Adams said. Adams has forged great relationships with many of his customers and cher-

ishes his connections with them, he told the *Napa Valley Register*.

Adams also brings his strong sense of integrity into his work—for example, when a local

man found a credit card, he gave it to Adams to be delivered to the owner. Adams frequently helps elderly customers when they've fallen or have trouble fetching their mail, and he helps others on his route when they need it.

When he's not at work, Adams has a passion for heavy metal, comics and skateboarding. He used to spend his off days practicing with his rock band, Four Eyes, and he was strongly influential in the creation of the St. Helena Skate Park in the mid-2000s. As an older skateboarder, he says that he "wanted older people to understand this wasn't just about destruction and graffiti and all those bad things that get associated with skateboarding."

He met his wife, Akemi, when he left her a note asking for Japanese lessons. She agreed, and eventually they married. Adams plans to spend his retirement in St. Helena with Akemi, and is looking forward to sleeping in and having nothing on his schedule.

"It's going to be emotional because I do love this job, and 34 years is a long time," he said. "It's just time to go." **PR**

