

Carriers and the mail make news online

Mail-centered stories frequently appear on social media and online news sites. The following are a few that have come to NALC's attention recently. If you find a story you'd like us to consider featuring, send it to postalrecord@nalc.org.

First grade teacher organizes 'Pug Penpal Project'

A Northbrook, IL, first grade teacher, Sharon Latek, has owned six pugs over the last 30 years, beginning with one her husband gave her as a wedding gift. She often brings her pugs to her classroom, and her students love them.

Latek's love of pugs is clearly displayed in her classroom, with pug decorations all over the room. One of them, a pug mailbox, sparked an idea. She wanted her students to practice writing but also wanted them to be engaged and have fun. Her solution was to have her students write letters to pugs.

She had 20 students, so she needed 20 pugs for them to correspond with. Latek posted on a "pug lovers" Facebook group to find them. To her surprise, she had an overwhelmingly positive response, with 25 pug owners reaching out by the end of the day, and the number of pug owners willing to participate kept increasing.

Realizing that this was bigger than just her class, Latek created the Pug Penpal Project, which started the following school year. Latek remembers seeing the excitement on her students' faces the day she handed out the pugs' letters to them.

"It brings my students joy and allows them to be confident with their writing," Latek said on "The Kelly Clarkson Show." "They always get nice feedback from their pug pals telling



Some of the letters from the Pug Penpal Project

them how much their writing has grown."

The program continues to expand, with classrooms in almost all 50 states as well as Canada, Sweden, France, Australia and the United Kingdom participating. As of April, Latek had more than 300 pugs willing to write to students around the world.

Massachusetts letter carrier escapes wild turkeys

In early April, Southeast Massachusetts Merged Branch 18 member **Wayne White** escaped three approaching wild turkeys. The interaction, caught on Ring cameras, shows White being followed to a customer's porch while he tries to use the package he was delivering to shoo them away.

White dropped off the package, then waved his hand saying, "Go away," before running to his mail truck.

Carriers and the mail make news (continued)



Wayne White is chased by wild turkeys while delivering a package.

The turkeys continued to follow him even as he made several additional stops.

"Every time I moved the truck, turkeys followed," the carrier told 7NEWS Boston.

"All day long it's been 'gobble gobble' texts and turkey texts, and I can't imagine what Thanksgiving is going to be like this year," White said jokingly.

Chicago letter carrier retires after 40-plus years

Larry LaPorte, a Branch 11 letter carrier who works in the Morgan Park

neighborhood of Chicago, IL, has been serving as a letter carrier for more than 40 years. He retired at the end of April, and his community came out to show its support.

As soon as residents across the neighborhood found out that he was about to retire, they began putting up lawn signs that showed their appreciation for his service.

"I came out one day and saw all the signs," LaPorte told *The Beverly Review*. "It kind of knocked me out. I can't put into words how grateful I am for the love and support they have shown me over all these years."

The community hosted a goodbye party at the Beverly Arts Center just before his retirement at the end of April.

"He keeps an eye on people; if he hasn't seen someone in a while, he checks in to make sure they are all right," Maureen Shannon, one of LaPorte's customers, told the publication. "You don't find many people who are as conscientious or caring as he is."

Two best friends send same birthday card for 81 years

Without fail, two Louisville, KY, best friends, Pat DeReamer and Mary Wheaton, have been sending a birthday card back and forth for each of their birthdays for more than eight decades.

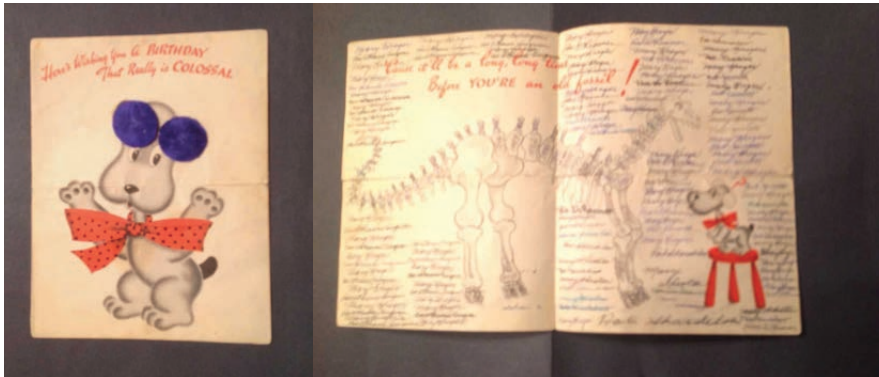
In April 1944, DeReamer got a birthday card from Wheaton for her 14th birthday, and that's where it all began. DeReamer then signed the same card and gave it to Wheaton for her birthday that year. They continue to send the card back and forth, a



When the customers on his route learned that Larry LaPorte (r) was retiring, they set up signs (above) to thank him for his service.



Photos by Beverly Review



Above l: Pat DeReamer (r) and Mary Wheaton-Kroger in 2005
Above: A Girl Scout group photo of Wheaton-Kroger (with braided hair) and DeReamer (with bob-length hair)
Left: The shared birthday card

Photos courtesy of Don Kroger

reminder of all the years they have spent as friends.

The exchange at one point earned the two women a place in the Guinness World Records for “Longest Greetings Card Exchange.”

Wheaton befriended DeReamer when she had just moved to town and didn’t know anyone.

“Mary kind of picked me up out of the gutter and kind of, you know, was nice to me,” DeReamer said to the NY Post. “We became really good friends.”

The story has appeared in other media outlets as well, including *People*, *The Washington Post* and local TV news.

Although the pair continue to exchange their birthday cards, DeReamer said they don’t get to see each other as much as they used to.

“I think as you get older ... you’re supposed to have more time, but we don’t seem to have as much time to share as we did when we were younger,” DeReamer said.

The duo plan to keep sending the card back and forth for as long as they can. “I’m sure if I can’t do it, my children will,” Kroger told *The Washington Post*.

65-year postmaster dies at 102

Edgar Kumley, who served as Redig, SD, postmaster, began in that position in 1949 during the presidency of Harry Truman and retired in 2015 at the age of 92. Even after his retirement he continued to work as a relief postmaster in the area. On April 6, at the age of 102, he died in Bowman, ND.

In the 1930s, Kumley helped families who walked across the prairie with all of their belongings during the Dust Bowl.

“We would take them in and feed them, and the next morning they were on their way again across the gumbo,” Kumley told USPS Link. “Gumbo” was the term used for fine clay soil that can become very mucky and develop cracks.

Kumley came from a postal family. His father and mother also served as postmasters in the same town. Additionally, his granddaughter, Victoria Constantin, carries on the family tradition as Redig’s relief postmaster.

“Edgar was always busy,” Constantin said. “At 98, he was still running around fixing cars and feeding cows. And in the summers, he would cut, swath and haul hay to prepare for winter.” **PR**



Edgar Kumley