

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.

New Jersey carrier honored for his 27 years of service

New Jersey Merged Branch 38 member **Donald Densel** spent 27 years as a letter carrier in the township of Bloomfield, and his dedication to the community didn't go unnoticed. After retiring on Feb. 27, the mayor and the township council recognized his years of hard work by presenting him with a proclamation at a township council meeting at the end of April.

"I want to thank the town of Bloomfield, and I want to thank the honorable mayor and honorable council," Densel said, according to TAPinto Bloomfield. "We have been together for 27 years. I felt the love and support; we were family. I love you all, and I am deeply humbled by this."



The mayor and other township officials commended Densel, saying, "Through every season and in all conditions, Don has gone above and beyond to ensure Bloomfield residents receive their mail safely and reliably," according to Postal Times. "More than that, he's been a familiar, friendly face in our neighborhood—building connections and brightening the day for so many along his route."

Influencer's history of giving back to her couriers

For the past several years, Serena Neel, a Las Vegas, NV, resident and short-form social media creator with more than 14 million followers across all platforms at @serenaneel, has been going above and beyond to show appreciation for her delivery people, including her letter carriers.

One of her first videos about her mail carriers was posted in April 2023. In the video, she puts together a basket of snacks to leave outside for her letter carriers and says, "I love feeding the mail men." She noted that she had done this the previous Christmas.

"I'd sit and watch them pick snacks from the window, and it was really fun," she said with a smile.

On July 13, 2024, she made a video putting out a cooler with drinks for her mail and package couriers on a 112-degree day. Sometime between then and April 2025, she swapped it for a small fridge with drinks and snacks meant to hydrate and energize them on their



long days. Over time, Neel has worked hard to brighten her delivery people's days even more.

Eventually she added a stuffed goose atop the fridge, which she adorns in festive outfits. In November, Neel added a claw machine that delivery drivers can use to win various prizes.

In one video posted in April, Neel created a pizza party competition between her delivery drivers where she assigned each delivery company a color of pom-pom and for each package they deliver, they put one of their color in a jar. The winning delivery service, FedEx, was given several Domino's gift cards for a pizza party.

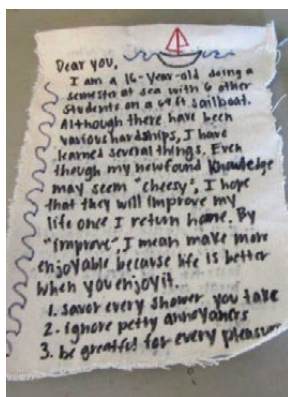
One of her recent endeavors to show appreciation for her delivery people was inviting them to a hibachi dinner in her back yard. Neel was able to get a pretty good turnout.

At the dinner, she said, "Thank you for coming, and thank you for delivering my insane amount of mail."

In the beginning of June, she set up a "Free 7/11" convenience store for her mail carriers and members of the community. She created posters and



Sumner and Molinari



Molinari's message in a bottle

stickers that said "Free 7/11" to add to the theme. Not only did Neel provide snacks, candies and drinks, she even offered toiletries and foods that have to be heated or frozen, emphasizing the convenience store experience. She added a hot dog warming machine, a cheese sauce machine, a freezer with ice cream and popsicles, a coffee machine, a slushy machine, and a warming oven with pizzas and taquitos, which she bought from the real 7/11.

"So many mailmen came today," Neel said at the end of the video. "My heart is just so happy."

Message in a bottle leads to a decade of friendship

When Anna Molinari was in a boarding high school in New York 12 years ago, she took part in a semester at sea. As part of it, she sailed from the Dominican Republic to the Bahamas, but it wasn't very windy on their journey, so the sailboat was moving slowly. The students and staff came up with ways to pass the time. One of them had the idea of writing messages and putting them in bottles then dropping them into the ocean, hoping someone would write back.

Molinari, 16 at the time, wrote her message about what she had learned on the trip and how she had grown as a person. An 18-year-old fisherman from North Carolina, Sumner, came across the bottle off the coast of the Carolinas. Molinari had included the school's address, so months later, she received a letter back from Sumner. About a year later, Molinari's family visited the Outer Banks, and Sumner drove five hours with his longtime friend to meet her in person.

According to *People*, Molinari described the pair as being "the real-life

John B and JJ from the 'Outer Banks' TV show." Continuing, she said, "He hopped out of his surfer car with swim trunks, bare feet and dirty-blond hair."

Throughout the years they have kept in touch through occasional phone calls and social media. Although their lives differ significantly, with Sumner working as a fisherman and Molinari in the social media and fashion design industries, they found commonalities.

Reflecting on the experience, Molinari told *People*, "I hope that people realize how organic and unexpected connections can be. They can come when you least expect them, and from someone who lives a completely different lifestyle than you. You truly just never know."

Virginia carrier beats cancer, returns to route

Willie Stone, a Richmond, VA Branch 496 member, has worked as a letter car-



Willie Stone

rier for 40 years, treating his customers like family—his job meant much more to him than just delivering mail. After vomiting and becoming weak during a workday last October, he was diagnosed with non-Hodgkin's lymphoma, a cancer of the blood, which led to his absence from his route for six months.

"I love what I do, serving the community and serving the people. I get a chance to bring spark, to bring life, to bring joy," Stone told WTVR-TV, the local CBS affiliate.

His customers appreciate his presence in the community.

One customer, Carla Thompson, told CBS, "He is really part of the family, we just consider him that way."

Another said, "He's the mailman of the century!"

When Stone was away from his route, his customers took notice.

"Just don't give up, don't quit," they said. "I'm giving you back what you give us," Stone said, describing his customers' support during his treatment.

After six months, Stone went into remission and was back to delivering. On his first day back, the community showered him with support, decorating their mailboxes and yards with messages that thanked Stone and welcomed him back.

"They touched me in a way that you can't even put into words," Stone said. "That's what we need out here more than anything. We still need to show one another that people still matter and care." **PR**

Residents welcome Stone back to the route and thank him after his medical leave.

