Carriers and the mail make news online

Dave Hamilton

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 York letter carrier retires after 41 years

After 41 years as a letter carrier, 25 of them in the Sedgwick area in Syracuse, NY, **Dave Hamilton** decided to retire. But the Branch 134 member didn't leave without a proper sendoff from his customers.

On his last day, neighbors gathered with balloons, thank-you signs and a cake with his photo on it for a celebration of his dedication to the community for four-plus decades.

"He really does love [being a letter carrier]," Dave's wife, Sue Hamilton, told WSYR-TV. "He loves just being with people and being outside and loves the dogs."

Neighbors spoke to the local news channel, praising Hamilton for his work.

"We live in a utopia with Dave as our mail carrier," one neighbor said.

Although Hamilton has enjoyed his work, and said it's "hard leaving," he added, "my knees are tellin' me it's time to go."

During retirement he plans to play golf, travel and spend time with his granddaughter.

Young people use social media to find pen pals

Em-J Staples, a 37-year-old Bay Area content creator, posted on TikTok offering to make pen pal pairings as a way to recreate a nostalgic feeling for herself and others. Little did she know that her video would go viral. It received more than 330,000 views and about 14,000 signed up to be matched via a Google form. Using the responses, she matched people based on their interests and personalities.

"I was nostalgic for a '90s summer," she told *The New York Times* of the inspiration for the post.

This isn't the first time a pen pal-matching service has gone viral. Back in 2020, Rachel Syme started Penpalooza, which had a high of 15,000 participants at one time.

Mass offers for pen pal matching aren't the only way pen pals find each other. Pen pal hopefuls find each other by looking through comment sections, posting on various social media platforms or reaching out via direct message (DM).

And Staples isn't the only one who is reaching out online to find a pen pal. *The New York Times* story refers to an undergraduate student, Simme S., who posted on TikTok and now has a pen pal, Mallory Ensing, whom she writes to and receives letters from every three to four weeks.

"There's no pressure to respond right away or keep a conversation going in real time," Simme, who describes herself as introverted, told the publication via DM.

Sophia Hue, another undergraduate student who found her pen pal on social media, said, "We don't have a set time when we need to respond to each other. There's a comfort element that you don't have to see them face to face."

While some seem to enjoy the element of virtual non-face-to-face communication, others have created connections that have led to in-person

adventures. Juliana Romeo is stationed with the Air Force in Germany. For the last four years Romeo has been writing with four pen pals, all of whom she found on TikTok. She recently went to visit one in Manchester, England.

"It could have been sketchy, but she was incredible," Romeo said. "I stayed with her and we went stationery shopping and had a whole weekend together."

Taylor Palmby (l) delivers mail to "Ted Lasso" star Jason Sudeikis (r).

Current resident of 'Ted Lasso's' former apartment delivers mail

It took three months of his mail being delivered to his old New York City apartment after he moved out before "Ted Lasso" star Jason Sudeikis finally received it. But it wasn't delivered to his forwarding address, nor was it delivered by a letter carrier. It was hand delivered by Taylor Palmby, the current resident of Sudeikis' former apartment, at the Aug. 4 "Ted Lasso" Season 4 premiere after-party.

"I was like, 'No way. There's no way this is the same Jason Sudeikis. There's no way,' " Palmby told *People* of receiving the mail at her new apartment. "Then I looked it up on the internet, and I found some website with him on it had this as his address. I was like, 'Oh, my God, I think that I'm living in Jason Sudeikis' old apartment.' "

Palmby was determined to get him his mail. "I don't know why, but I was like, 'It has become my job now to get this mail to Jason Sudeikis,' " Palmby said.

Palmby posted about the situation on Instagram. The post went viral with more than 64,000 likes and more than 1,000 comments. Palmby was shocked by the number of people with a connection to Sudeikis.

"I have so many DMs, 'I'm his cousin,' " Palmby told *Entertainment Weekly*. " 'I know his sister.' 'You can connect to this management company.' 'My boyfriend is best friends with him' or 'My ex knows him.' It was like six degrees of Kevin Bacon, but one degree of Jason Sudeikis."

Palmby said in her viral video that if Sudeikis wanted his mail, "You can reach out to me, or this is creepier, you know where I live."

Although Sudeikis didn't show up at her front door asking for his mail, the video eventually reached Sudeikis' team members at The Agency Group Public Relations, who invited her to the TV show premiere and after-party. Palmby accepted and was able to take her best friend Liv, a huge "Ted Lasso" fan. At the after-party, Sudeikis was finally reunited with the five pieces of mail that Palmby collected between May and August.

Describing her emotions to *Entertainment Weekly*, Palmby said, "I think it just really reminded me that things can be hard, but life is so beautiful and fun and whimsical. ... As Ted Lasso would put it, 'This experience really made me believe.' "

Some of the mail sent to Mallory Ensing by her pen pal, Simme

Online news (continued)

USPS prepares for winter holidays with new stamps

Between late August and late September, USPS has issued several stamps highlighting various winter holidays including Hanukkah, Christmas, Kwanzaa and general winter celebration stamps.

On Sept. 29, USPS released its ninth Hanukkah stamp during a dedication ceremony held at Touro Synagogue in New Orleans, LA. The graphic of the stamp has an aqua background and features a dreidel surrounded by orange flowers and small yellow dots to represent the lights.

Hanukkah is celebrated due to a ruler in the second century BCE banning Jewish practices resulting in a small group of Jews revolting. Upon reclaiming and cleaning the temple, they only found enough oil in the menorah for one day, but it somehow lasted for eight days.

The Christmas stamp was issued on Oct. 2 without a ceremony. The stamp took on a more traditional design using an early 16th century painting of Mary and Jesus named "The Virgin and Child Enthroned." The stamp follows a tradition, which began in 1966, depicting Mary and Jesus on a Christmas stamp each year.

The painting depicts Mary wearing red with a book in her hand on a throne and Jesus sitting on her lap with his hand on the book. In the background there are angels, foliage, two people, castles and mountains.

The holiday is celebrated due to Christian's' belief in the miraculous birth of Jesus to the Virgin Mary.

Additionally, USPS issued a Christmas cookie stamp on Sept. 19 at a family friendly event at the Smithsonian National Postal Museum. It depicts a Christmas tree, a Santa, a gift and a stocking cookie each on their own stamp.

Baking cookies began as a winter solstice tradition in Europe, Africa and other parts of the world but stuck as part of Christmas holiday tradition. Beginning in the 20th century, baking and decorating Christmas cookies became a tradition for many in the United States. Leaving out cookies for Santa started during the Great Depression as parents wanted to teach their children gratitude and kindness.

On Sept. 23, USPS issued a Kwanzaa stamp at the 11th annual conference of the Association for the Study of African American Life and History. The stamp is an illustration of a father and a daughter wearing green, red and yellow, colors which in combination symbolize African independence and anti-colonial resistance.

Kwanzaa is a holiday that originated in the United States in 1966 and was created to unify all African Americans by bringing together various religious and cultural backgrounds. The holiday follows ancient and modern first-harvest traditions practiced across the continent. It is seven days long and occurs from Dec. 26 to Jan. 1 each year. Each day celebrates a different principle: unity (*umoja*), self-determination (*kujichagulia*), collective work and responsibility (*ujima*), cooperative economics (*ujamaa*), purpose (*nia*), creativity (*kuumba*) and faith (*imani*).

USPS also issued a circular winter wreath stamp as well as a stamp depicting squirrels and chipmunks in the snow to further acknowledge the winter season. **PR**