

Carriers lauded for service to sight-impaired patrons



Massachusetts Northeast Merged Branch 25 member Marty Tildsley recently was honored by Boston's Perkins School for the Blind for the special bond the letter carrier has developed with his handicapped and visually impaired patron, 16-year-old Timmy Stevens.

"I've been Timmy's mailman since he was 4 years old," said Tildsley. "He's had a tough life, being confined to a wheelchair, so I'll talk to him and his mother anytime they're outside, and I try to bring him something for his birthday or for Christmas."

The carrier was among several receiving glowing commendations from customers who took part in an essay contest the Perkins School

sponsored to help celebrate National Postal Worker Appreciation Day.

Stevens' mother, Ellen Widdall, had no hesitation singling out Tildsley for recognition. "Marty has always treated Timmy just like any other kid on his route, and that is so important to our family," Widdall wrote. "He takes the time to stop and see how things are going and talks to him about school or sports."

The Boston Red Sox hold a particular place of affection for both carrier and customer. "[Marty] even came over one day and personally gave Tim a framed photo of one of his favorite players—Big Papi!" recalled Widdall, referring to the team's designated hitter, David Ortiz, by his popular nickname.

Letter carriers receiving special awards of appreciation from Boston's Perkins School for the Blind included (in uniform, from l) Alan Bolger, Southeast Massachusetts Merged Branch 18; Joseph Mitza, Boston Branch 34; and Martin Tildsley, Massachusetts Northeast Merged Branch 25.

Photo courtesy of Perkins School for the Blind





The library at the Perkins School for the Blind

Little green packages

The Perkins School was founded more than 175 years ago as the first school for the blind in the United States, according to the school's website.

Author Helen Keller and her teacher, Anne Sullivan, are among some of the institution's better known alumni, and writer Charles Dickens chose Perkins' embossing press to produce raised-print copies of his book, *The Old Curiosity Shop*, for distribution to blind readers.

In 1931, the school established its Braille and Talking Book Library to provide free services to Massachusetts residents who are unable to read traditional print materials because of visual or physical disability. The library estimates that every day, letter carriers circulate nearly 2,000 of its impressive inventory of recorded titles and magazines, as well as nearly 16,000 Braille books, to its blind patrons who live all over the Bay State.

"We deliver those little green tape packages all the time," said Tildsley, who works out of the Tewksbury post office, "but then you see them lined up in the library, on a wall 100 feet long and 10 feet high, and it really makes you stop and think."

A committee consisting of three school staffers and three Postal Service employees evaluated the dozens of nominating contest essays and selected three award winners.

"Without the dedication of the mail carriers, many library users would be unable to connect to the world of reading," said Perkins School President Steven Rothstein at a special commendation ceremony for the

honorees, who also included Boston Branch 34 member Joseph Mitza and Southeast Massachusetts Merged Branch 18 carrier Alan Bolger.

Mitza's patron, Barbara Dawson, noted her appreciation for how her carrier describes each piece of mail he delivers to her. "He takes a lot of time with this, reading this information to me," Dawson said. "And on his days off, he tells his substitutes to ring the bell and identify the mail for me."

New Bedford resident Dan Germano thanked Bolger for his dedicated service to both patron and service animal alike. "He makes a special effort by opening the door and neatly putting my mail on

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—Patron Ellen Widdall on her letter carrier

the table with my cassettes," Germano wrote, "and he always has a little bone for my guide dog, Turbo.

"If my mail is there for more than one day, he rings the bell to make sure that everything is all right," he added.

The school also presented a special certificate of appreciation and a bouquet of flowers to its own regular carrier, Branch 34 member Susan Abbott. ✉

Visit perkins.org for more information about the school's history and services.