

What's happening on social media

Various news stories and interesting anecdotes that celebrate letter carriers and the mail have been flying around 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.

Retired Delaware carrier called 'neighborhood icon'

On Newark, DE Branch 1977 member **Kinnon Johnson's** last day on the same route last December after 35 years, Newark Mayor Jerry Clifton proclaimed him a "neighborhood icon."

When the carrier joined USPS in 1984, his mother asked him not to deliver in his hometown of Wilmington.

"My mom thought if I took a job in Wilmington, then I'd probably get fired because I would be out there talking to everybody," Johnson told the *Newark Post*. "I needed to go somewhere where I'd be the only person I knew."

Newark made sense, and Johnson soon settled into his daily route of delivering mail. But the sociable Marine veteran quickly befriended his customers and became a part of the community he served.

On his last day of delivering before joining the "last punch bunch" last December, the carrier was given an outpouring of support and the proclamation from Mayor Clifton. His customers also honored him with a poster signed by residents throughout both neighborhoods.

Johnson's family also threw him a surprise retirement party in August that was attended by many longtime customers.

"The whole neighborhood loved him," customer Mike Bellman told the newspaper. "He knew them all."

Bellman noted that Johnson had seen

his kids grow up, and that when his son Justin became a Marine, the family bonded with Johnson. When Justin would send postcards home while deployed, he would write "Hi, Kenny," at the bottom so the carrier would see it.

Johnson also was known for looking out for the neighborhood, and once even helped save a man who had had a heart attack in his driveway.

"He cared so much about everyone on his route," Clifton said. "He was as much a fabric of the community as anyone in the area he served."

The carrier had opportunities over the decades to change routes, but he stayed in Stafford and Lumbrook because of his affection for the residents.

"I've always been a people person. I love the job because of the customer service part," Johnson said. "I give all praise to my customers. And they showed me so much love on my last day. They made me feel like I was the most important person in the world when I left there."

Johnson told the *Post* that he had planned to work longer but reconsidered those plans after the death of his mother four years ago. Realizing life is too short, he decided it would be nicer to spend more time with his wife, Teresa, and children, Isaiah, Kinnon Jr. and Kiera. He continues to serve as branch president, though he is considering relocating to North Carolina, where his daughter lives.

"This job has been great. All three of my kids went to college, got their degrees and are doing well," he said. "I owe it to the post office because they took care of me. I couldn't have it any better."

A celebrated retirement for longtime Massachusetts carrier

Dave Travers was honored in late August for his retirement at the Marlborough Post Office. After 33 years on the job, the Worcester, MA Branch 12 member is joining "the last punch bunch."

"[We] appreciate what you have given to the company and the customers," Postmaster Nicholas Teslikis said

at the event.

Travers regularly made 700 deliveries each day on his route in the middle of Marlborough.

"I've seen a lot of changes in the Post Office," Travers told the (MA) *Community Advocate*. "Just the way that

the mail is handled with different processes."

Delaware carrier gets retirement sendoff

Wilmington, DE Branch 191 member **Karen George** is retiring after 34 years of service, 30 of them on the same route.

Karen will be missed by the customers on her route, and the feeling is mutual. "I have very good people on my route. It's been awesome," she told ABC news affiliate WPVI-TV. "They're like family to me. I've been able to see the kids grow up," she said.

To bid her farewell, patrons threw a party to celebrate George and wish her well on her retirement. Neighbors posed for photos, and youngsters brought her gifts and flowers.

George told the TV station that in retirement she plans to work on her house and help take care of family



members. She also wants to keep in touch with the folks on her route.

Son of Texas carrier publishes anti-bullying book

Simeon Hudson, the 11-year-old son of Dallas, TX Branch 132 member **Sam Hudson**, published a book earlier this year with the hope of teaching fellow kids that bullying in any form is not OK.

The idea for the children's book "Harry and His Big Nose," written by Simeon and his mom, Candace, was conceived after Simeon saw one of his friends getting bullied at school.

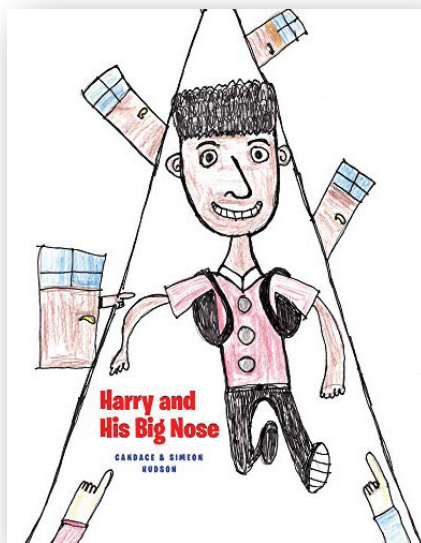
"I was out in recess, and I saw one of my classmates getting bullied by another and I told the teacher and she stopped the bullying," the youngster told the local CBS TV affiliate. "Then when I got home, I told my mother that we should write a book about it so we can stop it and help kids realize that they are unique and special the way they are."

Harry is a character that Simeon made up. He not only thought of the story and the title, but also illustrated the book himself. His mother helped with the grammar and structure of the plot.

"I didn't really think he was really that serious and then I thought, 'Wow, this is a good book,' and we sat down and we started writing out the story," Candace Hudson told the TV station.

In the story, Harry's mom imparts some wisdom to her son—that he should be proud of his nose because it makes him unique.

"It doesn't matter what the people who are bullying say because the way God created them is unique and the people that are bullying did not create that person, so they cannot judge them by how they look," Simeon said.



"Harry and His Big Nose" is available through large retailers.

Simeon doesn't want to stop there. In the future, he wants to create a "Harry" series focusing on various topics. He started with anti-bullying, and he plans to write a book with stories about personal hygiene next.

Illinois carrier retires to fanfare on his route

Larry Emma, a member of Oak Brook, IL Branch 825, retired in late July after more than 41 years and was thrown a celebration organized by the customers on his route.

Over those four decades, many customers became like family, and about 100 of those neighbors joined the carrier and his family for a Saturday gathering during his last day on the mail route. They shared hugs and memories with their beloved letter carrier.

"When I came out here this morning and started delivering my route and saw a balloon on every single box, I knew I was in for something. It's

fantastic. I really appreciate everything everybody did," he told *The Daily Herald*, adding, "I'm just doing my job."

The celebration followed from a conversation between neighbor Kathryn Medanic and Emma, who told her that after years of thinking about it, he finally planned to retire. Medanic took to a neighborhood Facebook group and email distribution list to ask people in the neighborhood to fly balloons from their mailboxes and to help compile a scrapbook of stories and memories to give to their carrier.

Emma's family members wore T-shirts with a 1980 stamp on one side saying, "Postage Due." On the back was a 2021 "Forever" stamp and "Postage Paid."

"I ended up being a mailman for 41 and a half years and never even thought of that as an occupation initially," Emma told the newspaper. "It's always been a good job."

Pulling out all the stops for a Texas retirement

Customers on **James Petty's** route organized a special celebration on Aug. 27 in honor of the 24-year letter carrier's retirement.

The Houston, TX Branch 283 member had made a lot of friends in the Briargrove Park neighborhood, and to thank him for that friendship, his patrons threw him a sendoff on his final day on the route. Residents told the local CBS affiliate, KHOU-TV, that the carrier's countless little acts of kindness had made a big difference.

Petty, who previously spent 11 years in the military, told the TV station that he loved his postal job, except on rainy days.

"I loved taking care of my customers," he said. "Normally I'm a quiet

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person, but when I'm on that route, I have to be outgoing, because they [customers and children] are going to engage me every day."

Residents said they had a special rapport with their mailman.

"Mr. James was good to everyone," Erin Beckwith told KHOU. "He knew where everybody's dog lived, too. Somebody told me a story where somebody's dog got out. Mr. James brought the dog back riding in the mail truck."

Petty said he was overwhelmed by the neighborhood's sendoff.

"I didn't expect so many people," he said. "It was kind of bittersweet. I'm ready to retire, but I hate leaving my customers."

"A lot of people think you have to do some big, huge gesture to make a difference," Beckwith said. "Mr. James made a difference in an entire community just because he took the time to be kind. The world needs more Mr. James."

A beloved Rhode Island carrier retires

"I remember one woman told me, 'Just seeing you come down the street, it makes everything OK.' And that will stick with me for a while," Charlie Donovan told the *Warwick Beacon*.

After 34 years with the Postal Service, the Warwick, RI Branch 3166 member retired on Aug. 31. For 30 of those years, Donovan delivered to homes and businesses in the Hills-grove neighborhood. He also collected food for the RI Community Food Bank.

"You get attached to the neighborhood," he told the *Beacon*.

Donovan originally had planned to work for the IRS, but after hearing that the agency would be downsizing, he applied at the Post Office instead—and

he is happy with that decision.

"It's like coming to work every day with your friends," he said. "The people in this neighborhood know me better than my own. It's amazing how many of them have my personal cell phone number.

"This is the best part of my job, just talking to people. Because it means something to everybody," he added. "I'm just delivering bills, but to some people I'm delivering information. They were scared to touch their mail during the pandemic; they were scared to leave their house. I found myself paying attention to the news just to keep them safe."

And during the holiday season, the carrier collects letters to Santa from neighborhood kids. "I would take care of the kids personally in this neighborhood," he said. "Parents will let me know that their kid is leaving a letter for Santa. We probably collect about 200 Santa letters in Warwick."

Donovan makes sure that every youngster gets a response the next day. "Just to see them smile is everything," he said, adding, "It goes back to the children, that's what a lot of this is all about, so these children know, especially is there's a problem, that there's also a safe space."

To help create more safe spaces for kids throughout Warwick, Donovan also mentors students at a local elementary school.

Donovan has seen the neighborhood change over the past three decades, through celebrating joyous occasions and at lower points such as the recession in 2008 as well as the ongoing pandemic. "It's like a family," he said.

"It'll be like I'm on vacation at first," Donovan said of his retirement, admitting that it "doesn't feel real yet."

Donovan plans to work on his 1967 Mustang convertible, as well as fish, hike and spend time with his two children and two dogs during retirement.

New York patrons honor treasured longtime carrier

Residents of Great Neck, NY, gathered on Sept. 14 to dedicate a tree and bench to their beloved former letter carrier **Tommy Janickey**, who died last year.

The tree and bench are located in Village Green Park, which is across the street from the post office where the Long Island Merged, NY Branch 6000 member worked for four decades.

To the dozens of patrons who showed up to honor the carrier, Janickey didn't just deliver their mail. In his 40 years of service, he formed meaningful relationships, and even touched the lives of others he never met, like Nassau County Legislator Ellen W. Birnbaum.

"Even though I did not personally have the pleasure of knowing Tommy, I, as a longtime Great Neck resident, have heard from so many of my friends and neighbors about this truly unique man," Birnbaum told the Great Neck Patch.

The ceremony was made possible through fundraising efforts led by Great Neck residents John Motchkavitz and Judith Kamali, with support from members of the Great Neck Alert Fire Company and Alert Benevolent Association, the Fountain of Kindness, and families on Janickey's route.

"Tommy was not only a letter carrier for many of us, but a friend who became an important part of the Great Neck community," Motchkavitz said. "We felt that his life needed to be honored and that is why we all helped raise



Residents in Great Neck, NY, dedicated a tree and bench to their letter carrier who died last year.

the funds to dedicate a tree and a bench in his name at the Village Green Park.”

Kamali remembered the carrier fondly, saying that he “delivered laughs, love, and celebrated all our milestones with us,” adding that “we needed to honor his memory in a way that he deserves.”

Pennsylvania neighborhood celebrates ‘best mailman ever’ upon retirement

Lansdowne, PA Branch 1929 member **Al Campanile**, who has been described by patrons on his route as “professional,” “consistent” and “kind,” has retired from the Postal Service after 37 years.

On Sept. 27, grateful residents displayed 200 bright yellow signs with “Thank you Al” typed in blue on the lawns along the carrier’s route on one of his final days of delivery.

At his last stop, about a hundred customers joined together to surprise Campanile with thank-you speeches, balloons and gifts for his decades of service. People shared stories of his commitment over the years and lined up to shake his hand and take a photo with him.

“When Al is there, everything happens. Your mail gets there, it doesn’t get lost, and it doesn’t get put in the wrong mailbox,” Virginia Maroun told the crowd, according to the *Philadelphia Inquirer*.

Campanile told the newspaper that he had suspected the neighborhood was up to something—partly because he saw flyers for the event in mailboxes—but he was blown away by the turnout.

“This is surprising, I didn’t expect this,” he said, thanking the group, which included his wife, daughter and son.

Maroun and neighbor Caryl Carpenter started planning for the celebration weeks prior, after they heard about Campanile’s retirement plan. The two soon rallied 18 block captains, who took up a collection of cards and money from more than 200 households along the route, and then printed the lawn signs.

The carrier says he plans to rest for a bit, then he and his wife hope to do some traveling.

Campanile told the *Inquirer* that he had started working for USPS in 1984 as a temp carrier after his mother brought home a flyer about job open-

ings. He was officially hired three years later and never looked back.

Over the years, the carrier has battled colitis and Crohn’s disease. Even after enduring painful surgeries and having to take time off, Campanile always returned to work and greeted his residents with a smile, they said.

“In this crazy time, it’s like Al is this consistent, warm presence in your neighborhood,” longtime resident Jane Rutledge, said.

“Write this down,” another woman told an *Inquirer* reporter. “Best mailman in the world.”

A favorite Massachusetts carrier retires

Southeast Massachusetts Merged Branch 18 member **Edward Willis** traveled the route he’s had for 36 and a half years one last time on Sept. 24. His co-workers made his day extra-special by decorating his postal truck with balloons.

“He’s one of the best,” North Easton Postmaster Kimberly Newcomb told the *Journal News Independent*. “He’s never in a bad mood.”

Willis drives a 14-mile route each day, and walks about eight miles, getting to see his customers in person. When he gets home, he takes a four-mile walk with his wife, he said.

When the carrier started his route in 1985, he made 400 deliveries daily—today, he makes 600 deliveries a day, he said.

“The last few years have been crazy,” he added. “The mail system is very important. There’s no doubt about it.”

In retirement, Willis plans to travel and spend more time with his family, including his two grandsons.

“It’s been a great job,” he said. “The people I work with are great.” **PR**