

Carriers and the mail make news online



Above: Charleston, SC Branch 3902 President Michael Hamilton (l) recognizes recent branch retirees Jose Bailem (c) and Daryl Smalls.

Below: Josh Allen



All Pro Reels

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.

20-plus-year South Carolina letter carrier retires

Jose Bailem, a Charleston, SC Branch 3902 member, was a carrier for more than 20 years and served the Isle of Palms—a slender barrier island—for almost all of them. In early February, the community came together to celebrate Bailem’s service to the Isle of Palms community.

A few days before his official retirement, the celebration was held at the town’s recreation center. Many residents attended, including the mayor, who told *Isle of Palms Magazine*, “Congratulations to one of my favorite mail carriers of all time. It was wet and cold, but Joe’s smile and laugh broke through the clouds.”

The letter carrier delivered, even in bad weather, such as a brutal winter storm that occurred in 2018. Bailem remembered that “the ice was thick. The roads were bad, but I showed up and I delivered the mail during that storm.

“I looked forward to every single day working on the island. It is a wonderful, beautiful place to be,” Bailem said. “Working or not, I love this island and her people. Delivering mail and packages and smiles here was a special time in my life. It was fun and I will miss it. The people, the kids, the dogs, just interacting with everything and everyone on my route was the best part of working here.”

Bailem said he and his wife plan to enjoy retirement together and travel to visit friends and family.

“The Isle of Palms holds a special place in my heart, and now I look forward to doing what I want, when I want

and sharing new and exciting experiences with my beautiful wife,” he said.

Buffalo Bills MVP shouts out mailroom employee

Josh Allen, who was named the 2024 AP NFL Most Valuable Player on Feb. 6, shouted out the team’s longtime mail room employee, Roderick Morrow, at the awards ceremony.

“I know this is an individual award and it says ‘most valuable player’ on it, but I think it’s derived from team success...[Shout out] to ‘Slick Rick’ in the mail room,” Allen said.

Morrow was deeply touched.

“He mentioned my name,” Morrow told “NBC Nightly News.” “I started crying. I basically broke down in tears. I couldn’t believe it.”

A local car dealership stepped in and honored Slick Rick by gifting him a new car after finding out he had been taking the bus to work all these years.

“Josh, you touched me for the rest of my life,” Morrow said.

Pennsylvania carrier documents neighborhood cats

Felix Smith, a Philadelphia, PA Branch 157 letter carrier, is documenting his appreciation for the cats on his route with his Instagram account, @usps.pspsp. “Pspsp” is the noise many people use to get cats’ attention.

His account features a profile photo of a cat donning a mail satchel and showcases “The Philadelphia Mail Cats” who sometimes jump into his truck, sometimes snoozing in the mail bins or in the passenger seat while he is parked. Smith said that he often carries treats, and the cats know that.

Smith has helped some of the strays get medical treatment and forever homes.

“Basically, it was a little kitten, you



know, covered in fleas, and I picked it up while I was at work,” he said. “And then a friend of mine was like, ‘I’ll take that cat.’ I was like, ‘I could just take pictures of these cats and people would probably love that, because people love cat Instagram accounts.’ ”

So, he started his Instagram account which has, since his first post in 2023, garnered more than 23,800 followers.

Smith, a letter carrier for about three years, said that he finds cats in need of rescue about twice a year. Pinned on his profile is Spike, for whom Smith was able to help find a family with the help of Fishtails Animal Rescue.

His Instagram has allowed him to find others who can help the cats on his route.

“I’ve made a ton of connections with people in the city that are into rescues and able to go help cats on the street,” he said.

Not only does the carrier help rescue them, but he enjoys hanging out with them when he has the time.

“It’s always cats just being super friendly, super personable cats that want to hang out, and I can hang out with them on my lunch break,” Smith said.

New stamps show Appalachian Trail

The Postal Service released Appalachian Trail Forever stamps at the end of February, featuring 15 depictions of landscapes on the trail. The art is based on photographs and shows parts of the trail in all 14 states where the trail exists.

The Appalachian Trail is about 2,190 miles, spans 14 states on the Eastern Seaboard, and takes about five to seven months to fully hike.

The footpath was proposed in 1921, and four years later, the Appalachian Trail Conference was established. By 1968, federal protection of the trail was strengthened with the National Trail System Act of 1968 and in the 1970s the National Park Service had authority of

the Appalachian Trail. Now, about 3 million people visit the trail every year.

Hiker gets help from USPS

Speaking of the Appalachian Trail, one hiker survived all 2,190 miles with the help of packages delivered by USPS. He was one of about 3,000 who attempt to “thru-hike”—hike from one end to the other—each year.

Teddy Kondrich, a 25-year-old bartender’s assistant, got the idea from his father, who had always wanted to hike the trail, but never got the chance.

“My hike allowed me to connect with him in a special way,” Kondrich told USPS *Link*.

He saw 14 states and a lot of wildlife along the way, but his hike wasn’t devoid of challenges. He was on the top of Mount Madison in New Hampshire with a group of hikers, when a severe thunderstorm hit. Taking refuge in a nearby resort, the hikers washed dishes and swept to pay for their night stay.

When Appalachian Trail hikers “through hike” they need help along the way. Strangers, called “trail angels,” give hikers rides to town and meals along their journey, but they weren’t the only ones helping Kondrich.

After months of hiking, shoes get worn out, supplies run low, and hikers don’t see their families for a long time. So, Kondrich was lucky to have family and friends send food, replacement supplies and notes of encouragement, which were delivered to 10 post offices on his journey’s route. A friend’s grandmother even sent him cookies.

Kondrich feels a sense of gratitude.

“On that trail, you become grateful for the little things, such as a dry day or a hot cup of coffee,” he said. “I’m now trying to practice that in the real world—to be grateful for the good moments when you can get them.” **PR**

Teddy Kondrich on his Appalachian Trail hike and one of the new Appalachian Trail stamps

A photo shared on the @usps.pspsp Instagram account by Felix Smith in January

