

# Customer Connect adds up for USPS

**B**y touching every address in the United States at least six days a week, letter carriers naturally develop special relationships with their customers. Since USPS's Customer Connect program began in 2003, thousands of carriers have successfully leveraged their interactions with business customers to encourage them to use the Postal Service, rather than rely on private delivery and mailing services. Below are some recent stories about Customer Connect leads submitted by letter carriers that have helped USPS earn new revenue.

## A simple question seals the deal in South Carolina

Columbia, SC Branch 233 member **Chris Mullen** has found that the simplest way is best when it comes to reaching out to customers for Customer Connect. "If I run into someone [on the route], I tell them about it," the 18-year carrier said. "It" is Mullen's key question: "I ask if they want to see if we can save them money," he explained.

This persuasive line worked perfectly when it came to Carolina Clutches, a store that sells high-quality handbags and accessories. The customer came to Mullen's attention once he saw that she was receiving a lot of deliveries through competitors. "If I see they have a lot of UPS packages, I reach out and ask," he said.

After Mullen discovered that the customer was looking for affordable shipping rates, he offered to connect her with the USPS sales team. A representative followed up with the customer and was able to recommend Priority Mail shipping for her business.

Mullen says that he has seen Carolina Clutches grow from the ground up. "When [the business owner] started, she was working out of her garage," he said. Mullen added that it was not a question of convincing her, but about letting her know about USPS's capabilities. "I didn't

have to say much of anything," he said. "She was looking to expand."

Mullen's willingness to reach out to his customers resulted in \$50,830 in new annualized revenue for the Postal Service.

## Texas carrier receives Million Dollar Lead award

On Sept. 9, Dallas, TX Branch 132 member **Kathy Brown** received a certificate signed by NALC President Fredric Rolando in recognition of her extraordinary feat. Brown, a 32-year letter carrier, had secured a sales lead that generated more than \$1 million for the Postal Service.

Brown said that when she saw a FedEx trailer parked in a company's lot, it piqued her interest. The business was a logistics company that she regularly delivered to on her route. "I saw the trailer, and I inquired, 'Can we get some of that business?'" Brown recalled.

The carrier knew one of the sales representatives, so after getting the company's information, she made sure to follow up on the lead. The sales representative met with the owners, and was able to convince them to switch some of their shipping. "[USPS] got their business for the smaller packages," Brown said. "We have better prices."

Though Brown has since left her business route for a residential route, the carrier said that her ability to generate leads was mainly based around the instincts she has built up over her years on the job.



**Kathy Brown (l) holds her award alongside Branch 132 President Kim Lewis.**

"It's an acquired ability," she said.

But she believes her personal connection also helps when it comes to convincing her customers to hear her sales pitch. "I show that I'm concerned, that I deliver," she added. "You have to show that you can walk the walk."

## In California, a carrier comes through for his customer

Flair Boutique clothing store owner Starr Donati faced a problem. Due to the pandemic-caused shutdown in her state, she was having difficulty getting her packages out to her customers. Her letter carrier, Stockton, CA Branch 213 member **Richard Valles**, saw an opportunity.

"I always try to grab people when I see them switching [delivery services]," Valles said. "I tell them that [USPS] is more dependable than other services." The 34-year carrier took the lead back to the office. A sales representative spoke to Donati and informed her about the better surcharge rate and lower shipping prices. Donati ended up switching not only her regular mail business to USPS, but her website shipping as well.

Valles says that his ability to connect with his customers does not come from his own persuasive ability, but from his long-standing connection with the people at those businesses. "They know me for so long," he explained. "You build up trust, you build up a comfort level." He said that this comfort level allows him to approach his customers with ease to ask them about their shipping needs.

Valles said that he thinks of the Customer Connect program as achieving a win-win scenario. "I can see both sides," he said. "It's good for the future of the Post Office, but I really believe that it's also best for the customer."

The carrier's readiness to go the extra mile for his customers paid off: His lead resulted in \$50,000 in new revenue. **PR**