

Your Postal Podcast Version 21 Transcript

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Welcome to Your Postal Podcast. This is Richard Watkins with the Postal Service's office of Corporate Communications. In this edition, we'll talk to an insider who manages a retirement community just for letter carriers. We'll take you to a small Post Office near the Florida Everglades with a big claim to fame. We'll also hear from an editor with a weekly stamp collectors' publication, to get a finger on the pulse of all things philatelic.

Tucked away in central Florida is a 153-acre retreat, home to about 800 people – the vast majority of whom are retired letter carriers. What's life like? David Rupert has the story.

(NALC Community Segment)

David Rupert: 33856. That's got to be one of the most unique ZIP Codes in America, and here's why. It serves the community of Nalcrest, which also stands for the National Association of Letter Carrier Retirement, Education, Security, and Training.

Jerry Kane has been the general manager of Nalcrest Retirement Community for the last 14 years. Jerry, what's the history? Who came up with this concept?

Jerry Kane: Nalcrest was planned by former president of the National Association of Letter Carriers William C Daughtery who always envisioned having a place for letter carriers to retire to after they finished carrying their mailbag. It was started eventually after much search of properties and locations in 1963.

Rupert: The community is reserved for retired letter carriers who are also members of the National Association of letter carriers. Right now about 800 residents live in the 500 ground-level units. But, what's life like living with hundreds of letter carriers?

Kane: A lot of people say to us "oh, when I retire I don't want to hang with a bunch of guys I worked with and hear old dog stories." But really, they're starting a new phase of life. The bottom line is they have other interests. They're golfing, they're playing horseshoes, shuffleboard. They're playing ball. By and large, they just forget about the past. They're living for the present and the future. There's a camaraderie, a sense of neighborly acceptance.

Rupert: What about dogs? Any canine issues at Nalcrest?

Kane: No animals allowed. People say, 'oh yeah, they were bitten by so many dogs that they don't want to have dogs around.' It's not that. It's just that people are here it's human nature and somebody might not take care of or pick up after their dog as much as someone else. And there could be health problems. That's the main reason. It's not because letter carriers are afraid of dogs

Rupert: Jerry, I bet you have some real characters down there that keep things lively.

Kane: I don't want to divulge anybody as being a characters because it might come back to bite me. They all have their unique way about them and contribute to the community."

Rupert: How much does it cost to live at Nalcrest?

Kane: The one bedroom apartment is \$355 a month and that includes water, sewer, basic cable TV and maintenance inside and out.

Rupert: Right now, there is a waiting list of about 45 people on a waiting list who have put down a one year deposit, waiting for their turn to live in this letter carrier paradise.

If you want more information, you can call (863) 696-1121 or write The Nalcrest Foundation POB 6359, Nalcrest, FL 33856-6359.

(Smallest Post Office Segment)

Watkins: Our next story takes us 160 miles south of Nalcrest to the town of Ochopee, Florida, where the local Post Office is also a tourist attraction. Brian Sperry reports on a Post Office for the record books.

Brian Sperry: Just north of the Everglades in Ochopee, Florida, sits a small white Post Office with a big title. According to the Smithsonian, it is the nation's smallest Post Office, measuring on the outside – 7 feet by 8 feet. The Post Office is so small it was once moved using a wheelbarrow. Postmaster Nanette Watson describes it this way.

Nanette Watson: It's a little bigger than an outhouse, and just enough room for everything I need.

Sperry: A former irrigation shed for a tomato farm, the location was pressed into service as a Post Office back in 1953 when the Post Office inside the General Store burned down.

Customers used to walk inside the Post Office to be served, but Watson says that has all changed through the years.

Watson: With the growing amount of equipment and responsibilities of things that we have to have in the building, we had to push it back out again. So right now they just come up to the doorway and we serve them out of there with a counter.

Sperry: Tucked inside the Post Office are most of the essentials of a larger office, including a phone, laptop computer, Integrated Retail Terminal, Postal Validation Imprinter, and a scanner. One necessity is missing however -- a bathroom.

Watson: I'm not OSHA (Office of Occupational Safety and Health) compliant (laughs). I live not even two miles from the Post Office, So I close up at 12 o'clock and go for an hour, eat and do my thing.

Sperry: Every morning Watson sorts the mail for Highway Contract Driver Geri Fish, who delivers the mail to the surrounding population of mostly Miccosukee and Seminole Indians.

The Ochopee Post Office is so popular it has its own postcard, which Watson stamps, postmarks, and sells to tourists.

Watson: We get a lot of the cruise connections between Tampa and Miami, and this is one of their stops. It's a smoke stop. They let everyone off to take pictures and buy postcards. I see more foreign visitors than I see American visitors, so I do my best to portray America and the Postal Service in the best way that I can.

Sperry: Some visitors to the Post Office are not so welcome.

Watson: I used to have a bear that would come out here every morning, and I have to clean up after him, after he went through the garbage. And then I had a snake that came in here every morning. It was a black snake, but you know I had to chase him out every morning.

Sperry: Watson enjoys working at the Ochopee Post Office.

Watson: Everybody's happy to see you. Nobody complains. It's a fun job and you meet people from all over the world.

Sperry: While the tourists and the title of nation's smallest Post Office can be fun, Watson says it's far from the only reason it exists.

Watson: Like I tell people that are here, that come in, they think we're just here as a tourist attraction. No, we're not just sitting here looking pretty, we actually have a job to do.

(Stamp Collecting Segment)

Watkins: With twenty-ten now in full swing, the Postal Service is already releasing several new postage stamps. Peter Hass talked with Jay Bigalke, associate editor of Linn's Stamp News -- a weekly publication for stamp collectors -- to find out philatelists' feelings about the latest stamp designs.

Peter Hass: Linn's Stamp News is a weekly newspaper that caters to stamp collectors, providing all the news fit to print about stamps from around the world, as well as news about the U.S. Postal Service. Linn's Associate Editor Jay Bigalke, like his readers, is an avid philatelist. I spoke with him via phone from his Sidney, Ohio, office about how postal employees can help boost the hobby of philately.

Jay Bigalke: One of the ways that I can kind of see postal employees contributing to the hobby itself is to actually stock the commemorative stamps and display them pretty prominently. That's one of the most frequent items that I hear from collectors -- that "my Post Office doesn't have any commemoratives in stock." And from what we've been told, the sales of a stamp happen most frequently within the first 30 days of the stamp being issued. Most of the time, we're hearing that stamps aren't on display during that timeframe. I think that would help promote the hobby better.

I think the Postal Service definitely could jump on and promote their stamp program a lot more. It would be a revenue source that I don't think is being adequately tapped. But if

they find the correct stamp issues and really is fairly topical -- I think this year's stamp program has a good selection of different subjects. This last year the Early TV Memories stamps were really popular with everybody. And we'll find out when our annual stamp poll at linns.com is completed at the end of this month, we'll see what collectors thought of the 2009 stamp program. I'm sure the Postal Service uses that as somewhat of a gauge.

Hass: At 27, Bigalke noted that his favorite stamp of 2009 is one most hardcore stamp philatelists had the complete opposite reaction to.

Bigalke: My personal favorite stamp would be The Simpsons, even though it really doesn't fit with the general demographic of a stereotypical stamp collector. Though this one was definitely a surprise to a lot of people, but I think it was well-received in areas of people who didn't normally collect stamps.

Hass: Polling on collectors' favorite 2009 stamps will continue through the end of February at linns.com.

(News Minute Segment):

Watkins: And now, here's a brief rundown of Postal Service headlines...

First Quarter Financial Loss - The Postal Service ended its first quarter of fiscal year 2010 with a net loss of \$297 million. This compares to a loss of \$384 million for the same period last year. Mail volume for the quarter was 45.7 billion pieces, a decline of nearly 9 percent. The one bright spot was Shipping Services, with a volume increase of 2.5 percent.

Post Office Recycling Efforts Expand - More than 200,000 tons, and counting. That's how much paper, plastics and other waste the U.S. Postal Service recycled in 2009, representing a decrease in its greenhouse gas emissions of approximately 1.67 million barrels of oil. An integral part of that undertaking is the Post Office Box Lobby Recycling program which is expanding to include an additional 2,400 Post Offices, including those in a number of U.S. National Parks. That brings the total number of participating sites to more than 8,000, an increase of 150 percent from 2005, when the Post Office Lobby recycling effort started.

The single largest mailing ever in U.S. history is coming to a mailbox near you. Through mid-April, the U.S. Census Bureau will send six separate mailings — a total of 447 million pieces. For the Postal Service, it means about \$200 million in revenue as well as an opportunity to provide a valuable community service. And that's Your Postal Podcast News Minute.

Watkins: Thank you for listening to Your Postal Podcast. Now, we'd like to hear from you. Send your story ideas and feedback to yourpostalpodcast@usps.com. A production of Western Area Corporate Communications. Copyright 2010, all rights reserved.