

VOLUME 3 · ISSUE 2

The Eagle

PUBLISHED QUARTERLY FOR EMPLOYEES
OF THE UNITED STATES POSTAL SERVICE

MAGAZINE

a greener link

IN AMERICA'S SUPPLY CHAIN





From Sea to “Shining, See!”

Whether you're passionate about protecting sea turtles or starstruck by stunning views of the cosmos, you'll find 2024 stamps from the United States Postal Service® that reflect part of you in America's compelling story.



History buff? Struggles for freedom shine forth in commemorations of the Underground Railroad and the 250th anniversary of the First Continental Congress. **Nature lover?** You'll also fall for Autumn Colors, Horses, Save Manatees and Garden Delights. **Serious about series?** Don't miss the 47th Black Heritage stamp, honoring groundbreaking jurist Constance Baker Motley (1921-2005); the 34th Literary Arts issuance, devoted to prizewinning author Saul Bellow (1915-2005); and Lunar New Year: Year of the Dragon, the fifth installment in the latest 12-year cycle. **Music-minded?** Bluegrass takes center stage this year. **In the holiday spirit?** Look forward to new Hanukkah, Kwanzaa and traditional Christmas stamps.

And that's just the beginning of the American story stamps will tell in 2024. These releases and more will be featured throughout the year.

Stamps are available for purchase at Post Office™ locations nationwide, online at usps.com® and by phone at 800-STAMP-24 (800-782-6724).



PUBLISHER

United States
Postal Service

Jeffery Adams
Vice President,
Corporate
Communications

MANAGING EDITOR

Yvonne Yoerger

EDITOR

Jonathan Padget

ASSISTANT EDITOR

Cheryl De Falco

DESIGN & LAYOUT

Mike Quigley

PHOTOGRAPHERS

Daniel Afzal
Amy Gibbs
Gavin Peters

ILLUSTRATIONS

Aldo Crusher

CONTACT US

The Eagle
475 L'Enfant Plaza SW
Washington, DC
20260-2166

EMAIL

The_Eagle@usps.gov

DELIVERING FOR AMERICA

Learn more about
the Postal Service's
10-year strategic plan
at [about.usps.com/
what/strategic-plans/
delivering-for-america/](https://about.usps.com/what/strategic-plans/delivering-for-america/).

One of the most powerful synergies of the Delivering for America plan relates to the future environmental performance of the Postal Service. As we continue our transformation, we will dramatically improve efficiencies that translate into a much smaller greenhouse gas footprint. Fewer truck trips; replacing old, inefficient vehicles with a majority-electric delivery fleet; modernizing facilities and streamlining processes so that we use less energy — these are all powerful benefits to our business and to our environmental sustainability efforts.



This issue addresses the aggressive but achievable environmental goals that have been established by the Postal Service Environmental Council. We believe our greenhouse gas reduction goals for 2030 are among the largest for any single organization in the United States. This is an effort that aligns with the environmental goals of the nation and, more importantly, aligns with the values and sustainability performance expectations of our clients. Our sustainability efforts — which are part of our business transformation — are helping the Postal Service strengthen its brand and become a more competitive organization.

We review an important Postal Service and Postal Inspection Service joint initiative to combat rising rates of crimes targeting postal employees and the mail. Heightened, focused law-enforcement surges have yielded hundreds of arrests in the past year to better protect our employees, while enhancing the security of the mail network and bringing criminals to justice.

We also look at the Postal Service's commitment to universal service, which ensures that in the most remote parts of America we are present — and valued in the lives of our fellow citizens — by providing them with access to the postal network and the larger economy. Our long relationship with America's military veterans is also covered in this issue. We look at the benefits to the Postal Service workforce from being a major employer of military veterans, who continue to serve their nation by serving their communities in postal roles.

With these and future topics, *The Eagle* magazine will capture our progress and provide context for the strategies and initiatives that are guiding us forward.

I hope you find this magazine useful and engaging. As always, thank you for the great work you do every day.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Louis DeJoy". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Louis DeJoy

Postmaster General and Chief Executive Officer
United States Postal Service

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A visit to ZIP Code 29401

SPOTLIGHT SEARCH >

Know a postal employee who is making a difference through volunteer work or community service?

Please send Spotlight nominations to The_Eagle@usps.gov.

Getting the Message Out

Speaking up about autism is a priority for this parent and USPS employee.

A baby's first words are a joyful milestone of childhood development. For Amanda Elms, a distribution operations supervisor in Kansas, they were also an unexpected turning point that led her to become an advocate for people with autism. Her son, Nicholas, started his budding vocabulary promisingly — not with “mama” or “dada,” but “glasses,” as he put on a pair of her sunglasses. Then, less than a year later, he lost his words and became nonverbal. He received an autism diagnosis in 2008, a month before turning 3 years old.

“We don't plan for things like that as parents,” Elms said. “I didn't know what to think, but I was determined to educate myself. This cause is close to my heart.”

Autism is a spectrum disorder. It's a lifelong, neurodevelopmental condition that affects how people communicate and interact with the world. People on one end of the spectrum have no verbal skills and inflexible, repetitive behaviors; they cannot live independently. People on the other end of the spectrum — while they may have atypical behaviors or difficulty reading social cues — can live with little to no specialized support.

Children, like Nicholas, may develop typically and then regress. “Early intervention is the biggest thing,” Elms emphasized. “Otherwise, you can lose a lot of ground.” She enrolled Nicholas at Heartspring, a nonprofit school in Wichita where he took speech therapy.

Having supervised people on the spectrum, Elms recognizes the need to be

patient and adjust to a communication style that “speaks” to the individual. Strategies include using simple, clear instructions; emphasizing keywords; pausing to allow time for comprehension; and supplementing with gestures and visual aids. She focuses on improving co-workers' understanding of autism and finding a way for everyone to communicate effectively.

Her autism volunteer work includes a parental support program affiliated with the University of Kansas Medical Center.

She has helped families in the program set up routines and picture exchange communication systems to facilitate understanding with nonverbal individuals.

She has also served on the Kansas

Governor's Commission on Autism. “Our main goal was to increase special education funding,” Elms said, and they worked on a bill, ABLE — short for Achieving a Better Life Experience — which passed in 2014. ABLE allows Kansans who meet specific criteria to save for qualified expenses like tablets and assistive communication devices without losing eligibility for Supplemental Security Income and Medicaid.

There was a time when Elms despaired of having a conversation with her son. “Nowadays, conversations with Nicholas can be very one-sided — because he's doing all the talking! I'll always be his voice when he needs me to be, but I enjoy just listening to him.”

“This cause is close to my heart.”

AMANDA ELMS

Distribution Operations Supervisor
Wichita, KS,
with her son, Nicholas



PROJECT

Hundreds of arrests in targeted cities are the initial results of a law enforcement campaign led by USPS and the U.S. Postal Inspection Service. The project seeks to curb the concerning rise in crimes against postal employees and the mail network.



Project Safe Delivery is part of the Postal Service's efforts to reverse the increase in financially motivated crimes in recent years. A key component includes deployment of postal inspectors in a "surge strategy" that targets high-risk metropolitan areas experiencing increased levels of postal crime.

With more inspectors on the ground and added support from federal, state and local law enforcement partners, each surge provides the Postal Inspection Service in that area with the extra resources to take firm action against criminals who steal mail and attack postal employees. In addition to coordinating with local law enforcement and prosecutors to focus efforts on known criminal patterns, tactics include surveillance activities, making public service announcements, conducting security reviews at postal facilities and providing presentations on personal safety to postal employees. Using this surge strategy, postal inspectors have made substantial progress and in less than a year have conducted 375 prevention activities and over

700 investigative and enforcement actions, resulting in more than 600 arrests.

To bolster its enhanced approach to protecting employees and the mail system, the Postal Service has substantially increased the monetary rewards it pays for information that leads to the arrest and conviction of a perpetrator of a mail crime. Since Aug. 21, 2023, the Postal Inspection Service has offered rewards between \$100,000 and \$250,000, depending on the severity of the criminal offense, ranging from property crime to robbery and the assault of a postal employee or contractor.

These surges and higher rewards are part of a broader security effort guided by Project Safe Delivery. Many criminals who threaten and attack letter carriers do so with the express purpose of obtaining arrow and modified arrow keys used to unlock apartment panels, outdoor parcel lockers, and

"The safety of every postal employee and the sanctity of the mail is our top priority. Perpetrators of postal crimes are finding out that we are relentless in our pursuit of justice."

— Gary Barksdale, Chief Postal Inspector

SAFE DELIVERY



neighborhood delivery and collection boxes. Using these keys, criminals have stolen mail to take checks they can alter and attempt to cash.

The Postal Service is replacing 49,000 arrow locks with electronic locks that are harder to break and can be remotely tracked and disabled. These new locks are being deployed strategically in high-risk areas, with installations in major metropolitan areas to follow. USPS is also increasing arrow key accountability reviews nationwide.

Blue collection boxes are also being hardened to deter criminals from trying to steal the contents. In fiscal year 2023, the Postal Service installed the first wave of 12,000 new high-security blue collection boxes at critical locations across the nation, with an additional 12,000 to be deployed in fiscal year 2024.

With these measures and more, the Postal Service and postal inspectors are expanding their arsenal of tools and resources that allow postal employees to conduct their public service mission safely and securely and ensure the American public's enduring trust in the mail system.

COMBATING A CRIME WAVE

Over the past three years, the Postal Service has witnessed a significant rise in mail theft and crimes against postal employees.

The evidence is striking. Reports of high-volume theft from mail

receptacles rose from 20,574 reports in fiscal year 2019 to 38,535 reports in fiscal year 2022, an 87 percent increase. In a more concerning trend, letter carrier robberies in the same period grew more than sixfold, from 64 cases in fiscal year 2019 to 412 in fiscal year 2022.

Check fraud is big business. According to the Treasury Department's Financial Crimes Enforcement Network, reports of check fraud in 2022 were nearly double the 2021 rate, which was already markedly higher than 2020. Annual losses attributed to check fraud are now valued in the billions of dollars.

While there is no single reason for this crime wave, the catalyst may be a combination of relief fraud perpetrated during the COVID-19 pandemic, the ease of committing financial crimes using cyber-enabled techniques, and a lax prosecutorial climate for property and financial crimes in some U.S. jurisdictions.

IF YOU ARE A VICTIM OF OR WITNESS TO A CRIME AT WORK:

Report it immediately to postal inspectors at uspis.gov/report or call 877-876-2455.

More tips and information on postal crimes and prevention can be found at uspis.gov.



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IN AMERICA'S SUPPLY CHAIN

Nearly every American business wants to work with suppliers that — all other things being equal — help their environmental performance, share their values, and can be a part of their sustainability story. Logistics partners are one of the most important parts of supply chain environmental performance, and improvements in trip reduction, efficient use of fuel and resources, and waste minimization are prized metrics. In the coming years, the Postal Service transformation under the Delivering for America plan will achieve one of the largest environmental performance improvements in the United States and help America's businesses achieve their sustainability goals.

Since the beginning of the modern environmental movement in the 1960s, American businesses have sought to amplify and demonstrate green commitments. What began loosely as eco-friendliness for many companies and industries has evolved into a well-defined management discipline, grounded in measurement of every operation.

Businesses, from the largest multinationals to the smallest local seller, integrate sustainability into their identities and form strategies based on their environmental impacts. This transformation has placed the American business community at the forefront of the sustainability conversation as both a champion of green practices and a driver of change.

Consumers seek to reward businesses they regard as sharing their environmental values, being strong environmental stewards and demonstrating environmental achievements. As a result, having strong sustainability practices and performance throughout the supply chain is a strong competitive factor for most companies. And because information technology has made environmental performance much more trackable and quantifiable — with businesses reporting on every aspect of their supply chain, from raw materials to delivering the finished product to the consumer — the role the Postal Service plays as a sustainable logistics partner is increasingly important.

Consumers are rewarding green supply chain practices

Study after study shows that consumers are increasingly concerned about the environmental impact of their purchases. Supply chain sustainability is becoming a big driver in purchasing decisions. A massive shift in consumer buying habits is coming as Millennial and Gen Z shoppers become predominant — trends likely to continue as publicity regarding climate change intensifies.

Consumers are more educated about supply chain sustainability and they seek information about the sourcing, inputs, production and total environmental footprint of the products they are buying. Almost half of consumers want companies to take the lead in creating sustainable change, according to a recent NielsenIQ consumer study, and 1 in 5 respondents are concerned about the sustainability of suppliers.

According to studies by First Insight and GreenPrint, which track consumer sentiment, some three-quarters of young shoppers — and as many as 4 in 5 — are prepared to pay more for a sustainable product. This is an important data point for a demographic expected to become the country's

67
PERCENT

of U.S. consumers say they would pay a premium for products that are sustainable.¹

89
PERCENT

of consumers had in some way adjusted their purchasing behavior toward green products from 2018 to 2022.²



¹ Source: NielsenIQ: Trend Watch 2023: Sustainability

² Source: Statista 2023 Global Shift to Buying Sustainable Products

biggest spender on consumer goods by 2030. And Statista, known for its insights on consumer trends, found that almost 30 percent of consumers had made significant changes in their purchasing decisions in the five years prior to 2022, and nearly 1 in 10 respondents claimed they had “turned around their way of life” to be environmentally sustainable. This concern translates into business benefits, with consumer products that have prominent sustainability labeling growing 2.7 times faster than conventional counterparts.

Given this business imperative to demonstrate sustainable practices, the entire chain of custody for a particular product is important. Corporate reporting now extends to business partners and every movement and process along the supply chain — including the transportation and logistics carriers that move parts and finished products throughout the supply chain — which makes the Postal Service's sustainability goals and performance an important factor.

“Our customers, especially our corporate customers, want partners who are part of a green supply chain. Our new sustainability efforts fulfill that request and more, as we transform our operations, our strategies and our transportation network to become a leader in sustainability.”

— **Jacqueline Krage Strako**, Chief Commerce and Business Solutions Officer

Environmental leadership

More efficient operations equate to better use of time, energy and materials. Improved environmental performance is a direct consequence of the operational transformation taking place across the Postal Service as part of the Delivering for America plan. To ensure that aggressive sustainability ambitions and initiatives are baked into operational planning, Postmaster General Louis DeJoy established an Environmental Council in March 2023. The council consists of senior USPS operational executives and is chaired by DeJoy.

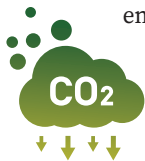
The Environmental Council sets the 10-year sustainability strategy for the Postal Service, establishes goals and objectives, and oversees implementation of core initiatives. One of the most important functions relates to measurement and quantifying improvements in environmental performance so that business customers are best able to understand and value progress toward core goals.

"We can be a leader in the nation in the reduction of our greenhouse gas footprint and align with the country's current environmental initiatives, while also maintaining the cost and operational effectiveness we are required to maintain by law to accomplish our public service mission."

— **Louis DeJoy**, Postmaster General

Aggressive, achievable and worthy goals

The Postal Service Environmental Council has established goals — using fiscal year 2021 as a baseline — that by 2030 will achieve among the largest greenhouse gas reductions of any organization in the United States. This commitment not only helps the nation achieve its environmental goals, it also improves the Postal Service's competitiveness for customers seeking more environmentally sustainable partners.



GREENHOUSE GAS EMISSIONS BY 2030

>40
PERCENT

The target reduction in greenhouse gas emissions, mainly from buildings and postal transportation, by optimizing routes and reducing trips for trucks and carriers, and procuring a new vehicle fleet with a mix of vehicles.

>20
PERCENT

The target reduction in greenhouse gas emissions, primarily from optimizing contract transportation, including air and highway contract routes.



SUSTAINABLE ACQUISITION

>75
PERCENT

The target for diverting waste from landfills by increasing paper, cardboard and shrink-wrap recycling.

>74
PERCENT

The target for the percentage of recycled content in USPS packaging.

>88
PERCENT

The target percentage of USPS packaging that can be recycled by consumers.



Carbon accounting through USPS BlueEarth®

Postal Service customers are increasingly establishing rigorous corporate sustainability goals and metrics that they communicate and report to consumers, investors, partners and customers, and they have high expectations for similar reporting by their suppliers. The Postal Service has a suite of customer services and product initiatives related to waste minimization, carbon footprint, recyclability and sustainability practices. Those services, which include a business customer carbon accounting calculator, fall under the USPS BlueEarth program.

Specifically designed to enable business customers to measure and manage carbon emissions across their supply chains, USPS BlueEarth Carbon Accounting is an innovative, free service that provides detailed reports on the greenhouse gas emissions specifically associated with their actual USPS mailing and shipping services based on product, type, size, weight, processing, distribution and transportation. This enables business customers to more comprehensively track progress toward their sustainability goals and reporting metrics, enhance their communications and marketing opportunities, and better manage the carbon life cycle footprint of their supply chain products and services, including delivery by the Postal Service.

More sustainable, more competitive

Supply chains are the hidden power of global commerce, and the Postal Service plays a prominent role. Encompassing the entire production and logistics flow that starts with raw materials and ends with finished products, an estimated 80 percent of trade worldwide is organized through supply chains, according to the United Nations Global Compact. Whether they provide access to raw materials, labor, machinery, infrastructure or transportation, supply chains are an essential part of business, and the environmental performance of the whole supply chain reflects on the finished product and the business or brand that sold it.

The Postal Service mission and its unique ability to serve 167 million addresses in the nation means it is often the final and most visible part of a relationship between a business and a consumer. Every delivery reflects not just USPS values, but customers' values, too. As the Postal Service deploys battery-electric vehicles throughout its delivery fleet, modernizes facilities and improves processes that improve operating efficiencies, it will help improve the environmental performance of every shipper and mailer. Increasingly, the Postal Service brand will signify environmental performance and achievement, and an important link in America's green supply chain.



Packaging With a Purpose

The Postal Service sources the paper and cardboard for its products — like the paper packaging for USPS Priority Mail® and Priority Mail Express® — through a careful chain of custody that ensures the pulp comes from sustainably managed forests and meets the certification standards of the Sustainable Forestry Initiative or Forest Stewardship Council. Additionally, a partnership with How2Recycle® helps customers and employees understand how to properly recycle USPS products and packaging found in Post Office™ locations and on usps.com.

“The dramatic Postal Service sustainability gains to be achieved through 2030 will reduce the total environmental impact of every postal customer that mails or ships. That is a great result for the nation and for the postal customer base.”

— Jennifer Beiro-Réveillé, Chief Sustainability Officer





For veterans, the shift from the military to USPS is a natural way to keep doing their best for the country.

The U.S. Postal Service has a long history of providing career opportunities for veterans and reservists, allowing them to apply the valuable skills they obtained in a military career and continue to serve the American public — all in a community of their choosing.

Around 63,000 veterans work for USPS — approximately 10 percent of the postal workforce, compared with 5.6 percent of the country's available labor who once served in the military. At any given time, thousands of postal

employees are active members of the reserves.

The breadth of roles within the military is incredibly diverse — providing millions of personnel with training and skills that can be applied to a wide range of postal jobs.

Indeed, the business case for hiring veterans goes beyond the widely recognized trait of mission focus gained by military experience. Additional skills attributed to veterans are strongly linked to enhanced business performance — particularly in a competitive marketplace. These qualities that are honed for the armed services transfer well to civilian careers.

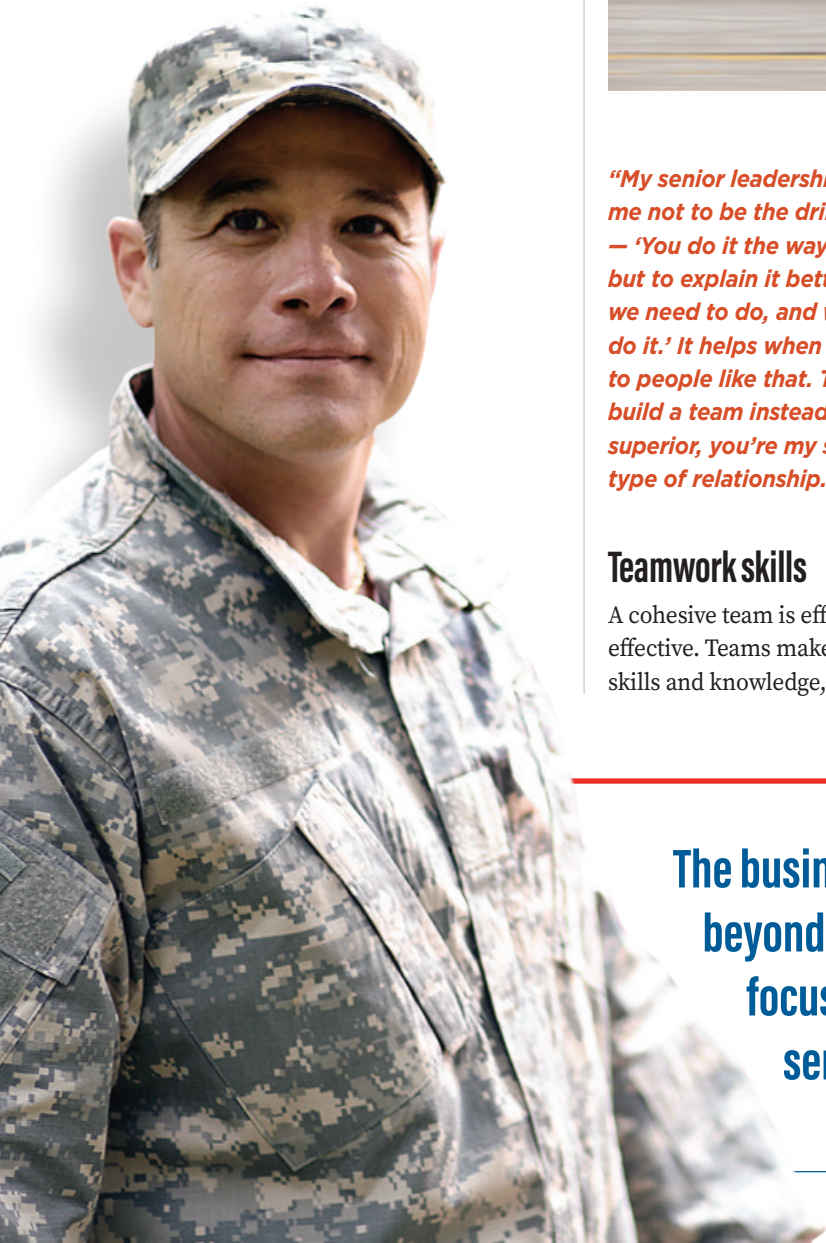
A powerful sense of duty

Duty is integral to the armed forces. The term is built into military vernacular: active duty, off duty, tour of duty, duty assignments. Duty has special significance to service members like Lead Automotive Technician Ulises Sanchez, who is also an Army MOS 31B Military Police reservist.

“I take pride in my job. Serving with the military — it’s an honor to put on the uniform. And same thing with the Postal Service. It’s a very different uniform, but I still feel a sense of pride, and a sense of duty.”

Leadership qualities

The Army emphasizes seven values, summarized in the acronym LDRSHIP: loyalty, duty, respect, selfless service, honor, integrity and personal courage. Postmaster Michael Poll II, a retired command sergeant major who served 27 years with the U.S. Army Military Police Corps, learned what *not* to be as a leader:



“My senior leadership training taught me not to be the drill sergeant type — ‘You do it the way I said, period’ — but to explain it better: ‘This is what we need to do, and why we need to do it.’ It helps when you actually talk to people like that. Then you can build a team instead of an ‘I’m your superior, you’re my subordinate’ type of relationship.”

Teamwork skills

A cohesive team is efficient and effective. Teams make use of diverse skills and knowledge, which leads to

better problem-solving and results. Teamwork is valued in the workforce, and critical in the armed forces, as Melissa Gogan, a USPS leadership development specialist, explains:

“I was in the Navy, on an aircraft carrier — basically a giant city on water — my entire four years. You have to be able to work with a diverse group of people. Because I joined at such a young age, it really did instill discipline, and responsibility, and being part of a team. I take that with me everywhere I go.”



The business case for hiring military veterans goes beyond the widely recognized trait of mission focus. Qualities that are honed for the armed services transfer well to civilian careers.



The U.S. Postal Service is committed to investing in employees and honoring our nation's obligation — our duty — to veterans.

Coping skills

Veterans have gone through highly stressful — often life-threatening — experiences. Their perspective on what constitutes a “big problem” likely differs from a nonveteran’s. As explained by Manuel Musquiz Jr., a delivery support specialist who was a corporal in the Marine Corps:

“There are people who will fly off the handle for somebody not completing a minor report or not being perfect every day. My job is to make sure that our processes are being followed, but — as detrimental as it is to have a process failure — it’s not the end of the world. If you make a mistake, we fix it and move on.”

Time management skills

Employees in the National Guard and reserves, in particular, rely on impressive time management skills. Working full time at the Postal Service while keeping up a military career

and the training and coursework involved — plus, often, raising a family — is a lot to coordinate.

Keith Ruelan, an operations performance analyst, has 12 years with the U.S. Coast Guard Reserve, and has simultaneously worked 10 of those years at the Postal Service.

“Time management is definitely important — setting certain goals for yourself and finding enough time to complete those goals. Just being tenacious and relentless is something that’s helped me in both jobs. You know what has to get done, and you find a way to get it done, no matter what.”

Federal agencies and businesses that employ veterans benefit from the training and development of service members. In recognition of these benefits, and as part of its overall focus on diversity within the workforce, the U.S. Postal Service:

Hires veterans. USPS posts jobs on the [Feds Hire Vets](#) and [RecruitMilitary](#)

websites, and shares news about hiring opportunities on the Veterans Affairs website. The Postal Service also maintains a Military page in the Career Opportunities section of [usps.com](#). The postal recruiting team attends job fairs nationwide and year-round, seeking military veterans, reservists and their family members.

Supports veterans. The Veterans Affairs group is part of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion at the Postal Service. The group publishes *Mail Call Veterans News*, a semiannual newsletter, and holds roundtable discussions regarding health benefits and legislation like the PACT Act, a 2022 law that expands benefits for toxic exposures. The Postal Service’s Human Resources Shared Service Center provides guidance regarding rights and benefits, including Military Buy Back and Wounded Warriors Leave. Also, the Postal Inspection Service has an Operation Protect Veterans page to raise awareness of scams that target military veterans: [uspis.gov/veterans](#).

Recognizes veterans. USPS honors current and former service members in the workforce in May, both for Military Appreciation Month and for Memorial Day, and on Veterans Day, Nov. 11. USPS has issued well over a hundred stamps that pay tribute to military accomplishments and the valor of service members defending freedom and democracy.

USPS values the qualities veterans bring to the organization; it is committed to investing in employees and honoring our nation’s obligation — our duty — to veterans.

For those trading a military uniform for a postal uniform, USPS provides a welcoming second career, offering veterans the rewards of continued public service combined with the benefits of a fulfilling vocation, a secure future and a safe workplace in the community they want to call home.

Flood of Memories

As the Postmaster General Heroes' Program turns 20, the first honoree reflects on its beginning.



PMG Heroes' Program

Over the past two decades, the Postmaster General Heroes' Program has grown into a mainstay of supporting and valuing postal employees – efforts that are now a focus of the Delivering for America strategic plan. The women and men recognized have gone above and beyond the call of duty in a variety of situations, such as assisting lost children, getting help for sick or injured customers, spotting fires, and more. How did it begin?

**20
Years**

The PMG Heroes' Program couldn't have gotten off to a more dramatic start, thanks to the actions of Wilmington, DE, Letter Carrier Joseph Grabauskas. In mid-September 2003, he and the rest of the community were worried about the impending Hurricane Isabel. But the remnants of Tropical Storm Henri were barely behind them.

According to The News Journal newspaper, Henri poured up to 10 inches of rain on the area, already soaked from a wetter-than-normal spring and summer. The deluge spawned flash floods that ranked among the worst since the U.S. Geological Survey began keeping records for northern Delaware's waterways.

The program illustrates one reason why the Delivering for America plan prioritizes investing in employees: They invest so fully in their communities, the country is stronger and safer as a result.

A raging river

Remarkably, Grabauskas recalls, it wasn't even raining at the time he was delivering mail in the low-lying Glenville subdivision. The false sense of security gave way to a life-threatening reality as Red Clay Creek became a raging river around Glenville, soon submerging it in 12 feet of water, trapping the Postal Service employee and many residents of more than 270 homes.

Grabauskas was officially credited with securing the mail on higher ground before helping rescuers evacuate people and pets from an apartment complex.

Looking back in May 2023, shortly before his retirement after 37 years of service,

Grabauskas, 59, remembers more details of a haunting day that affected him long afterward.


There were other aspects to the experience, he says, some of which weren't publicized, some of which he rarely discusses.

Harrowing moments

Grabauskas was among the last people rescued from Glenville after efforts that stretched over five hours. Why? Emergency responders couldn't see house numbers at locations where victims were stranded. He was needed to point out addresses.

"They're difficult memories," he says. "There were two kids who let go of their mom as they were trying to reach a rescue boat. The kids were completely submerged, and I reached down and grabbed one, while the other grabbed my leg."

Then there was the customer with two Great Danes that normally "didn't like the mailman." Grabauskas says the dogs were much friendlier as he helped them and their owner reach safety after their rescue boat flipped over.



Letter Carrier Joseph Grabauskas

was one of the last people rescued from the flooded Glenville community in Delaware because emergency responders needed him to point out addresses in order to save stranded residents. His actions paved the way for the recognition of around 5,500 postal employees over the next 20 years through the Postmaster General Heroes' Program.

Heroes Among Us

Although he tried to count blessings of the day — “Nobody died!” — it weighed on him: the exhausting struggle to save terrified customers and pets, the destruction of scores of homes, the devastated lives left behind when the floodwaters receded.

For a few weeks, Grabauskas visited with victims who would gather in Glenville. He participated in community fundraisers. He worked with a USPS Employee Assistance Program therapist to come to terms with the disaster, which eventually led to Glenville’s demolition.

And he was soon invited to be commended by then-Postmaster General Jack Potter during a Board of Governors meeting held at Wilmington’s Hotel du Pont.

Reluctant honoree

Initially, Grabauskas was hesitant to become the first PMG hero, leading the way for around 5,500 other postal employees recognized in the 20 years since then.

The PMG Heroes’ Program reflects a simple, yet powerful, idea: Because they know the habits of their customers and the rhythms of their communities, Postal Service employees are often the first to notify emergency personnel and render aid when something is wrong.

It also illustrates one reason why the Delivering for America plan prioritizes investing in employees: They invest so fully in their communities, the country is stronger and safer as a result.

Not every hero has a tale as epic as Grabauskas does to recount, yet even the simplest acts — say, calling 911, or asking a neighbor to check on someone an employee is worried about — can have a profound effect: lives saved and lasting gratitude for the Postal Service’s reassuring presence nationwide.

‘Heroes’ Corner’

After approved PMG hero nominees receive a commendation letter from the postmaster general, they are featured in “Heroes’ Corner” on Link, the Postal Service’s national employee news website, where it has become a popular column. In 2020, “Heroes’ Corner” received a national award for excellence in employee communications.

The nomination form is available via usps.link/heroes, where you can also find the “Heroes’ Corner” archives and relive two decades of heroism that illustrates how Postal Service employees do so much more for their communities than deliver mail.

Many PMG heroes, like Grabauskas, don’t relish the attention. They’ll tell you they were simply doing the right thing, as they hope anyone else would do.

“I didn’t want the recognition,” he says. “I didn’t want to hear ‘hero’ anymore. But I went down for Wilmington. I wanted them all to know: We do good things here.”



Chicago Letter Carrier Shonda Lemon

grew concerned about an 89-year-old customer whose mail was piling up. Lemon contacted police, who found the woman in dire need of medical attention after falling several days earlier. The customer was rushed to a hospital. “She really does look out for people and cares about them,” her niece later said of Lemon.



Chester, PA, Letter Carrier Joseph Ho

spotted a customer who has Parkinson’s disease lying on a sidewalk. Finding the man bleeding profusely from a head wound, Ho called 911, alerted the man’s wife, rendered first aid to slow the bleeding and comforted the couple until paramedics arrived. “My husband and I can’t say ‘thank you’ enough,” his wife later wrote in a letter to USPS.



Omaha, NE, Letter Carrier Noreen Mintken

thought she heard a car backfiring, but two boys ran around the corner, screaming “They have a gun! They’re shooting!” Mintken sheltered them behind a building as more shots rang out, then led them to safety at the nearby Boys & Girls Club. “I just did what I thought was right,” she said.



Greenwich, CT, Letter Carrier Jermaine Shirley

had just left his Bronx, NY, apartment to go to work when he smelled smoke. After rescuing his wife and 2-year-old daughter, he heard neighbor Everdean Codner shouting for help from an upper-floor window. Desperate to get his 11-month-old twin sons to safety, Codner dropped them one by one to Shirley, who caught them and ensured they were out of harm’s way. “I thank Jermaine for saving my babies,” Codner told the New York Post. “Now I have a second chance to be a father to my sons.”

We Go Everywhere!

ZIP Code™

29401

The Charleston Post Office is one of the oldest in the United States. It was established before 1700, when South Carolina was an English colony. If you were to go on a walking tour of Charleston, this would be a great place to start — in ZIP Code 29401.



Charleston, SC

History buffs flock to Charleston, a Southern port city founded in 1670. It is known for cobblestone streets and antebellum architecture. There are thousands of historic buildings in the Charleston area.

The current **Post Office** building, completed in 1896, represents the Second Renaissance Revival style.

The interior is lavishly appointed with marble, mahogany and brass finishings. From the lobby, you can access a small museum and



Above: The multicolored facades of houses on Rainbow Row.

peruse a collection of old stamps, memorabilia and newspaper clippings describing Charleston's postal history.

The building is shared with a federal courthouse. Standing

Left: The U.S. Post Office and Courthouse was built in 1896.





Far left: The iconic spire of St. Michael's Church, one of many places of worship that give Charleston the nickname Holy City.

Left: Stately homes along The Battery facing Charleston Harbor.

Head south on Meeting Street and you'll see the **Nathaniel Russell House**, a National Historic Landmark. Built in 1808, it has a distinctive, free-flying staircase that spirals, with no

apparent support, for three floors.

Keep going and you'll come to **White Point Garden**, more than 5 acres of parkland with views of **Charleston Harbor** and **Fort Sumter**.

Follow the coastline along **The Battery**, a fortified seawall and promenade lined by grand estates from the 18th and 19th centuries. The **Edmondston-Alston House** is open for tours. Nearly 200 years old, it has withstood the Civil War, a major earthquake in 1886 and numerous hurricanes.

Continue up East Bay Street and admire **Rainbow Row**, a line of 13 historic homes. It is one of the most photographed parts of Charleston. Judge Lionel Legge and his wife, Dorothy, are credited with inspiring the color palette along this block when they painted their home pink. Neighbors chose similar pastel hues, hence the rainbow.

Continuing east you will reach **Waterfront Park**, an 8-acre green space, where the **Pineapple Fountain** is a focal point. Pineapples are a popular motif in the city, as a symbol of hospitality. You'll see them on everything from gateposts to bedposts.

Get back on East Bay Street and follow the signs for the **Charleston**

City Market, a good place to conclude your walking tour. Here, there are plenty of eateries and souvenir shops. You'll see lots of pineapple-themed mementos and sweetgrass baskets woven by local artisans. The Gullah people of the Lowcountry region, known for their distinct culture, language, cuisine and craftsmanship, are recognized for their skill in this centuries-old craft. Don't forget to pick up a few postcards to mail home.



Reckoning With the Past

As you tour Charleston, take time to recognize and learn how the system of slavery is part of the city's history. Charleston was a hub for the slave trade; as many as 80 percent of African Americans can trace an ancestor through the Port of Charleston. Educational exhibits throughout the city and at the **Old Slave Mart Museum** in the city center tell the story of enslaved people. At the corner of Gillon Street, the **Slave Auction Site Memorial** gives visitors pause to contemplate how the city must reckon with its past. Charleston has recently taken new steps in that direction, too, at Gadsden's Wharf — once the largest single point of entry into North America for enslaved Africans — now the site of the **International African American Museum**.

outside, you can see that a county courthouse and city hall are at the same intersection. This crossway, on Broad and Meeting streets, is known as the **Four Corners of Law** and represents federal, state and local law — with **St. Michael's Church**, on the southeast corner, representing divine law.

Charleston is known for its cobblestone streets, horse-drawn carriages and stately antebellum homes.

The church — famous for its iconic white spire — is one of many in the city. Charleston has numerous big and beautiful churches representing a wide variety of denominations, which is why Holy City is one of its monikers.

KEEPING ALL OF AMERICA CONNECTED

One of the most defining characteristics of USPS is its universal service obligation: the commitment to serve every American business, residence, and community with regular mail and package delivery. Congress has specified that the Postal Service's "basic function" is to "bind the nation together" by providing "prompt, reliable, and efficient services" to all communities.

This intrinsic principle that guides the organization's public service mission has a number of parameters that address the geographic scope, range of products, access to services and facilities, delivery frequency, pricing, service quality, and security of the U.S. Mail. While certain obligations — such as providing an integrated network to deliver mail and packages six days a week — have been codified in detail, for the most part Congress has set forth broad policy standards to which USPS must adhere.

This approach was deliberate: Congress wanted to ensure that USPS has the authority to evolve its practices as circumstances change, so as to enable the continued provision of high-quality services that meet the changing needs of the American people, in a financially self-sufficient manner.



One of the first acts by the country's founders was to create a robust postal network, which they saw as the most effective way to connect the population with their newly elected representatives. For much of the organization's first 100 years, Congress saw the mail system as the primary conduit to ensure an informed electorate through the free (or almost free) and widespread distribution of newspapers.

An evolving mission

As the country grew, so did the postal network, with post roads and Post Offices often the first sign of the federal government in frontier towns. Until the mid-1800s, though, postal service was primarily a channel for the

Left: A family in Westminster, MD, receiving mail on the first day of Rural Free Delivery service in Carroll County, 1896.





The only mule mail routes operating in the United States today serve the Grand Canyon. Here, a mule train sets out for Supai, AZ.

government, as the cost of mail was prohibitive for average citizens. But that changed with a series of laws between 1845 and 1861 that lowered postal rates, replaced distance-based pricing with uniform domestic rates based on the weight of a letter, and protected postal revenues so that the Postal Service — the Post Office Department at the time — was financially capable of serving every American, no matter how remote.

This bond between the American public and its postal service would strengthen over the coming decades, first with the advent of free city and rural delivery, then with package delivery through Parcel Post, and eventually through speedier delivery using modern forms of transportation like railroads and airmail. Together,

FOR AMERICANS LIVING IN REMOTE LOCATIONS, THE POSTAL SERVICE'S **COMMITMENT TO UNIVERSAL SERVICE** CAN BE MORE THAN A LINE OF COMMUNICATION; OFTEN, IT IS A LIFELINE TO THE OUTSIDE WORLD.

these and many other improvements ensured every American had equal access to the postal network.

Postal services everywhere

For Americans living in remote locations, the Postal Service's commitment to universal service can be more than a line of communication; often, it is a lifeline to the outside world. From the Havasupai people living inside the Grand Canyon, to the small communities that dot the northwestern coastline of Alaska, to

the residents of Maine's coastal islands and the far-flung territories Americans call home, the Postal Service is a primary source of essential goods — in some cases even groceries, pet food, nonperishables and small appliances.

The Postal Service's unique partnerships with other government agencies also bring essential services to communities. Millions of Americans, including more than 330,000 veterans, rely on the Postal Service to deliver medicines. Through the Veterans Affairs Mail Order



UNIVERSAL SERVICE

Above: From left, Ron Haberman, former Alaska District manager; Ed Ruiz, WestPac Area vice president; Postmaster General Louis DeJoy; and Candice Kvale, the district's Post Office operations manager, gather outside the Akiak, AK, Post Office.

Pharmacy, USPS plays a crucial role to ensure that those prescriptions are delivered every workday. Since the early 1970s, Americans have been able to use the Postal Service to apply for and renew their passports. Many communities and states also rely on mail-in ballots to ensure their full participation in the country's democratic process.

Self-funded obligation

The universal service obligation is funded by the revenues earned by USPS, which generally receives no tax dollars to support its operations. When First-Class Mail volume continued to grow, there was sufficient income to support this worthy ideal. However, widespread access to the internet, shifting consumer habits and an unrealistic 2006 mandate to prefund retiree health benefits challenged the Postal Service's ability to fund its universal service obligation. A fundamental change was needed, one focused on operational excellence and sound financial stewardship that allowed the institution to preserve its public service mission. The answer was Delivering for America.

Unveiled in March 2021, this 10-year transformation and modernization plan is, at its core, designed to keep Americans connected and to link them

Many aspects of the universal service obligation are broadly defined, but the Postal Service is clear in its mission to:

Deliver mail and packages at least six days a week via an integrated mail and package network.

Provide prompt, reliable and effective services throughout the nation.

Establish and maintain postal facilities in locations that ensure all Americans have ready access to essential postal services.

Offer access to affordable and, in certain circumstances, uniform prices.

Operate and maintain a network that can receive, process and deliver mail and packages throughout the United States, its territories and to military installations abroad.

Support products and services that meet the needs of all mail users.

more effectively. Every aspect of the plan — modernizing USPS networks, facilities and transportation systems; motivating and retaining postal employees; creating new, affordable products and services; securing effective and meaningful legislative reform; investing \$40 billion; and embracing sustainability — all of it — is designed to support universal service.

More effective service

The average time for the Postal Service to deliver a piece of mail or package across the nation has been around a consistently impressive 2.5 days since mid-2022, and 98 percent of the nation's population now receives mail and packages in less than three days. Gains are also being made to reach the Delivering for America goal of meeting or exceeding 95 percent on-time service performance for all mail and shipping products; in some categories, that target has already been achieved.

More changes are coming, and in the years ahead, Americans will see tangible improvements in how USPS connects every community in the country. This is the true essence of the universal service obligation — it is, and will always be, a public service that endeavors to improve the lives of every American.



Mailin' it!

The Official Podcast of the United States Postal Service

Nearly every person in America experiences the Postal Service every day — by saying hello to a mail carrier, passing postal vehicles on the street, visiting a Post Office or just by the simple act of reading one's mail. But really, how well do you know the United States Postal Service?

Mailin' It! takes you behind the scenes and explores the rich role and history of a thoroughly American institution. Join our hosts for a fun look at your United States Postal Service.

Visit about.usps.com/newsroom/ or scan the QR code below to listen.





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