

'Your Postal Podcast' Transcript – November 2014

MiMi Johnson: Welcome to *Your Postal Podcast*, a production of USPS Corporate Communications. I'm MiMi Johnson. In this edition, you'll hear about a South Carolina letter carrier who became the talk of the nation because of his heroic act. Then we'll head to Idaho, where a letter carrier is being honored for her delivery of a special kind of books.

Postal Hero Segment

Johnson: A South Carolina letter carrier who saved an infant's life believes 'there's a hero in all of us.' David Rupert tells us his amazing story.

David Rupert: Greenville, South Carolina, Letter Carrier Christopher Brown was delivering mail to a customer's home when a woman approached him from inside the home carrying her infant son. The child had choked on a piece on a piece of plastic wrapper, and she couldn't dislodge it. Brown took the unconscious child into his arms, performed the Heimlich maneuver and eventually cleared the plastic from the child's throat.

The story was first carried in a local newspaper and then it went viral, appearing on the Internet and hundreds of television stations and newspapers across the country. He became a source of national postal pride in just a few days. We caught up with him while he was on break from his route. What was it like?

Christopher Brown: Well, I mean, it's been amazing, actually. The customers have been very, you know, just outstanding with acknowledgment and, you know, wanting to meet me and take pictures, and -- overall across the country also, looking at some of the emails and some of the messages, you know.

Rupert: His fellow carriers haven't let him forget either.

Brown: (Laughs) Well, they're still calling me "hero" to this day. (Chuckles) I try to get them to stop from doing that. But you know, It's been great. Even with the Post Office, certain carriers having people come up to them and thanking them for the great job that they do and you know, giving us a lot of good, you know, recognition and acknowledgment. It's been nice.

Rupert: Like real heroes do, Chris went home after his route, never mentioning the incident to anyone except to one good friend. It was the child's parents who called the Postmaster. And he saw them the next day.

Brown: The first time I saw her was the next day, which was Saturday. I was going to go to the house to check on the son to see if he was okay. And her and her husband came out of the house before I could get there and they just thanked me so much for what happened. Her husband shook my hand and thanked me. She told me that she contacted the Post Office that day, earlier that day and told the Postmaster what happened.

Rupert: The apex of Christopher Brown's attention was an invite to appear on the Ellen DeGeneres show with the Coopers.

Brown: Wow, that was – that was amazing. Just to be invited was a great thing. But then going there was just awesome, you know, with the folks talking to me and thanking me. And then

when we got to the show, you know we didn't get to spend a lot of time with her, but just being on the stage – that was an amazing event. The crowd was very enthusiastic. I mean, it was fun!

Rupert: He understands the impact this has on postal employees and the overall postal image. But he thinks any employee can be the next one to step up.

Brown: I would say just keep up the good work. You know, people are noticing what we are doing, even though it may seem that they don't, but really they do. I've read many stories of other carriers and people doing something similar to what I did. I guess mine just happen to make the national attention. But you know, we're actually doing that every day. There's a hero in all of us, I believe it just takes something special to bring it out.

Talking Book Segment

Johnson: Postal Service carriers deliver nearly 500 million pieces of mail each day, but few are as anticipated or appreciated by customers as those featured in our next story. Brian Sperry reports on how "talking books" make a difference in the quality of life of those with physical limitations.

Betty Jordan: Gretchen is just so agreeable, so thoughtful, always trying to answer my questions, knowing that I have a little bit of a handicap. Well, what can I say, just as helpful as anyone could possibly be.

Brian Sperry: That's Betty Jordan of Boise, Idaho, extolling the virtues of her letter carrier, Gretchen Young, who she says seems to always have a smile, a kind word, and a book on CD for her to enjoy.

Jordan suffers from macular degeneration, and while she continues to do many things she enjoys in life, she can no longer read a book. The books on CD or tape are a godsend. She enjoys listening to a book each night before going to bed. While Young delivers the sound recordings, they are provided through the Talking Book Service from the Idaho Commission for Libraries, where Sue Walker is the Regional Librarian.

Sue Walker: The Talking Book Service is a free service for anybody who cannot read standard print because of some sort of physical disability, and that includes visual disability or inability to hold a book or turn the pages, and it could be a permanent or temporary disability. Currently we serve about 3,200 Idahoans. Last year our circulation was about 214,000 and that includes, both audio tapes, and also braille materials.

Sperry: Walker says it's all about making a connection and a difference in their lives.

Walker: It is just wonderful to get feedback from folks who use it. We get daily things about oh, you know, you saved my life, and I don't know what I would do without this service, because quite often these disabilities tend to be isolating, and so this is something that really helps keep people linked to the world, being able to get these audio materials.

Sperry: The Postal Service plays a key role in the service, not just in Idaho, but throughout the country, says Walker.

Walker: This service is a real unique combination/collaboration between the National Library Service, which is part of the Library of Congress and the states, and the Postal Service, and

each year the Postal Service receives a stipend for going ahead and delivering the materials, free postage for the blind and physically disabled, and we just recognize that we couldn't do it without the Postal Service; that if, you know, we had to go ahead and ask folks to go ahead and absorb the fee of going back and forth through the mail, a lot of folks couldn't afford to do it.

Sperry: Every year, the Idaho Commission for Libraries asks their customers to submit nominations for Idaho Postal Carrier of the Year. This year, 90 carriers were nominated, with Gretchen Young being selected for the honor.

Walker: We asked individuals to nominate their Postal carrier because they work with them on a daily basis, and when we read the application we could just see how much Gretchen does for Betty. And when we met Gretchen I could see what a kind and caring person she is.

Sperry: Young received the award in front of her peers, as well as representatives from the Talking Book Service, Boise Postmaster Dan Corral, and Salt Lake District Manager Jimmy Wolf. The award was a surprise to Young and included a certificate, a banner and a plaque to hang in the break room, along with cake and lemonade for her fellow employees at the Overland Ranch Station to enjoy with her. In her own humble way, Young is grateful for the recognition.

Gretchen Young: Well, it made me feel proud for the service that I give, and it made me want to keep doing that. I like to be appreciated. (Laughs)

Sperry: Also at the award ceremony was a grateful Betty Jordan, who was effusive in her praise of Young.

Jordan: I am a snowbird, and my husband and I leave and go to California, and that's a little bit trying when it comes to having your mail catch up with you, or hold your mail or "I'll be back at a certain time, would you please deliver it at that particular time." Gretchen always comes through, and I just appreciate that.

Johnson: There is a talking book service in almost every one of the 50 states as well as Puerto Rico. Those interested in learning more about the Talking Book Service can visit the National Library Service website at www.loc.gov/nls.

News Roundup

Johnson: And now, here's a look at recent Postal news:

A 7-foot-1 superstar needs extra headroom, even on a postage stamp. Basketball legend Wilt Chamberlain, the only NBA player to score 100 points in a game, will be honored on two Forever Stamps measuring just over two inches tall.

Chamberlain's best professional seasons were with the Philadelphia Warriors and Los Angeles Lakers, and the Postal Service will join the Philadelphia 76ers to dedicate the Wilt Chamberlain stamps at halftime during the Sixers' December 5th home game against Oklahoma City.

The NBA Hall of Famer, who died in 1999 at age 63, is shown in a Philadelphia Warriors uniform on one stamp; the other shows Chamberlain pulling down a rebound as a member of

the Lakers. Chamberlain, one of the most dominant NBA players of all time, played in the league from 1959 through 1973 for the Warriors, 76ers and Lakers.

Chamberlain's 31,419 career points stood as a record until it was broken by another Lakers center, Kareem Abdul-Jabbar, in 1984. Chamberlain also holds the rebounding record with 23,924.

Chamberlain's dominance not only earned him two stamps, it earned him two nicknames: "Wilt the Stilt," and "The Big Dipper."

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