

TRANSCRIPT – YOUR POSTAL PODCAST – JANUARY 2016

Diedre Tillery: Welcome to *Your Postal Podcast*. I'm Diedre Tillery. Today, we'll hear from employees on what makes them so proud to work for the Postal Service. You'll also hear from a California breast cancer survivor who was so moved by the power of a supportive letter from a stranger that she started an organization that's helping others experience the very same thing.

We deliver billions of pieces of mail to millions of customers but the job still comes down to an individual and their connection to their job and their customers. David Rupert spoke to employees throughout the country on what the Postal Service means to them.

David Rupert: Postal pride – that's what keeps our lobbies clean, our machines humming, the mail moving and our employees going the extra mile for customers. With a tradition that's almost two-and-a-half centuries old, the Postal Service has touched the lives of millions of Americans and generations of employees. We recently asked some of these employees, "What does the Postal Service mean to you?"

Jody Brady, a clerk from Vernon, Colorado, has just 10 months of employment with the Postal Service, but she has a full understanding of our place in small-town America.

Jody Brady: You get to fly your flag. You get to meet the people. You helping a little town stay together and stay connected. It might sound a little corny, but to me the U.S. Postal Service, we've had it so long, it's like apple pie and baseball.

Rupert: Lonnie Brown, a clerk in Carlin, Nevada, also shares in the pride of the service. And it's also been a source of stability for his family.

Lonnie Brown: It's always meant pride. It stands for symbolism of America and everybody depends on us delivering their mail to them. And it's just been security for me and my family, and I love everything about it.

Rupert: For Cherryvale, Kansas, City Carrier John Broughton, the Postal Service has a deep family connection. Two of his sisters are also employees. But they all have a bond that goes back a generation. He and his siblings are all products of a romance brought about because of the mail.

John Broughton: It all started with a First-Class letter. When she was looking at the Detroit paper, she saw this, picked my dad's name out of the list of all these GI's at Camp Thomas, Indiana, and picked him to write to. And she essentially told him she was single and over 21. And they wrote to each other all during World War II. My dad came home, and they got married in March of 1946.

Rupert: For PTF Clerk Deanna Eliason from Marsing, Idaho, her Postal Pride started when she was a military brat.

Deanna Eliason: That's the way we kept in contact with people, and to get a letter from the States was the biggest thrill of my life, especially when it had my name on it.

Rupert: And now she's helping military members connect with their loved ones as an employee.

Eliason: Being that I'm on this side now, I'm helping them get their mail to their loved ones and knowing that those people on the other end are going to be feeling the same way I felt getting something from home.

Rupert: She relishes it when her customers interact with her outside the Post Office.

Eliason: People will recognize me and they go, "I know you from somewhere. Where is it?" Because I'm not in uniform. They'll talk to me and sometimes thank me. I've become friends with some of these people.

Rupert: After 23 years, she still holds her head up high – Postal Proud.

Eliason: I do take pride in what I do and I love my job. And I love it just as much from the day that I started to this day now.

Tillery: A cancer survivor who was impressed by the healing power of a single handwritten letter later founded an organization to deliver similar letters to other women facing the same challenge. She recently talked with Peter Hass about her efforts.

Peter Hass: *Girls Love Mail* is an organization founded on the strength of handwritten letters based on the experiences breast cancer survivor Gina Mulligan had when she was diagnosed with the disease almost seven years ago.

Gina Mulligan: Actually, I'm a novelist, and I have a book coming out actually in May that's about women's empowerment. So, I was researching letters and working on my writing when I was diagnosed with breast cancer; and that's August 2009. I was just working on letters and researching letters and suddenly I was a patient, and I started getting mail. It wasn't until I actually started receiving letters in the mail – I received over 200 cards and notes from people. Most of them I *didn't* know; they were kind of friends of friends that had heard about my situation. And that's when I realized that we've kind of forgotten in all the text messaging and emailing, we've forgotten how important it is to get something that's handwritten – how truly healing and tangible they are. So, once I got through treatment and I really wanted to kind of pay it forward – and I met so many women who really didn't have any support; they weren't getting any letters, which I knew – so I thought, I want to do something and pay this forward. So, fast-forward to August 2011, and that's when the program started. And we just began with writing letters at the kitchen table, and fairly quickly it took on a life of its own. By the end of that first year we had over 3,000 letters.

Hass: Mulligan said letters come from volunteers who send notes or cards of encouragement individually, or as members of groups. In 2015, volunteers sent more than 21,000 letters which were distributed to breast cancer treatment centers across the country.

Mulligan: Well, how it works basically is, letter writers send the mail to us. We're based in Folsom, California. And so, we get individual letters or letters in a big box from different groups who run programs. We actually do read all the letters. They go in our special Girls Love Mail envelopes. And then we send bundles of those envelopes to the breast cancer centers and programs that then hand them out. So, because of patient confidentiality, we can't actually mail individual letters to patients. We don't have names and addresses. Now, the breast cancer centers all have a process for new patients, whether they come in through a patient navigator program, or for example, when I was newly-diagnosed, I got this binder of information – and it's

really scary; it's got things about all kinds of treatment options and wigs and chemotherapy and so a lot of the centers will put our lovely letter of encouragement in that binder. So it's handed out in various ways – whatever works for the center best.

Hass: The descriptive name of Mulligan's letter-writing organization was a clever suggestion from her husband.

Mulligan: It's actually based on my initials, Gina L. Mulligan, for Lynn – so it's Girls Love Mail. (Laughs.) He thought it was fun to name it after me, since I was starting the charity. But it really came down to just wanting to incorporate that we were talking about regular mail and not email, and so that's really where the name came from.

Hass: For information on how you can help send handwritten letters to women diagnosed with breast cancer, visit *GirlsLoveMail-dot-com*.

Tillery: In Postal Service news, the 2016 stamp program was recently previewed. The lineup of subjects is diverse as always. But there is also a bit of an extraterrestrial theme.

2016 marks the 50th anniversary of the premier of the seminal television series Star Trek. Fans of the series are sure to enjoy the new Star Trek Forever stamps, showcasing four digital illustrations inspired by classic elements of the television program.

The words "SPACE . . . THE FINAL FRONTIER," from Captain Kirk's famous voiceover appear beneath the stamps against a background of stars.

Other 2016 stamp issues feature The Moon, some visually compelling Views of Our Planets, and the New Horizons journey to Pluto and beyond.

Closer to earth, there's something for everyone, including Hollywood legend Shirley Temple and music icon Sarah Vaughan. On Feb. 2, preacher, activist and civic leader Richard Allen will be honored as the latest member of the popular Black Heritage series. Learn more about all the 2016 stamp issues at about.usps.com.

Tillery: Thank you for listening to this edition of *Your Postal Podcast* – and a reminder: We love hearing from you. Please email your comments or story suggestions to us at: YourPostalPodcast@usps.com. And please visit our archives to listen to previous editions at ***YourPostalPodcast.com***.

Your Postal Podcast is a production of USPS Western Area Corporate Communications. Copyright 2016, United States Postal Service. All Rights Reserved.

###