

TRANSCRIPT – YOUR POSTAL PODCAST – NOVEMBER 2015

Diedre Tillery: Welcome to a special Thanksgiving edition of *Your Postal Podcast*. I'm Diedre Tillery. In this edition, you'll hear the story of a Utah letter carrier whose attention to a young boy's simple wish drew a response exponentially bigger than he'd ever imagined. You'll also hear about how an Arizona city carrier wrote a letter to the customers on his route but ended up warming the hearts of people around the world.

Mystery, suspense and science fiction are just a few of the many varieties of books available at local libraries. However for one 12-year-old boy in Sandy, Utah, those books were out of reach, and he turned to the somewhat unusual literary outlet of advertising mail for his reading material. This caught the eye of the neighborhood's letter carrier, who thought about ways he could help. Rod Spurgeon explains how that postal employee's simple social media plea to assist the boy turned into an international mission.

Rod Spurgeon: In today's modern world, people have more options than ever to immerse themselves in their favorite reading material. Gadgets such as tablet PCs, electronic readers and smartphones have joined traditional print media to give story enthusiasts more reading options than ever.

For 12-year-old Mathew, none of these options were available until he met Sandy, Utah, City Carrier Assistant Ron Lynch.

Ron Lynch: One day I was putting mail in the CBU at an apartment complex and I saw this young man there reading advertisements; he was reading like, "watermelon 59 cents a pound" and that kind of thing and I thought that was very strange, but just kind of went about my business. And then later he came up and asked if I had any extra advertisements or newspapers or anything he could read like that. He asked me that and I asked him, "Why do you need those?" and he said that he really liked to read and he didn't have any reading material.

I started reading when I was 3 years old, my mother taught me, and I remember getting my Little Golden Books in the mail every month or so. And it just floored me that in today's day and age, somebody didn't have access to reading material. And I knew what it had done for me; my treasure was the little Richard Scarry book that I had, and I knew I had to help him with something, even if it was just a few books.

It occurred to me, wait a minute, you know, I have 400-some-odd friends on Facebook. I could certainly put a plea out to them and get some books for him. I bet we could get 50 to 60 books for this young man.

Spurgeon: Mathew returned to the lobby of the apartment complex a few minutes later and Ron asked for him to get his mother. Ron wanted to ask for her permission before proceeding with the request for books on social media.

Lynch: His mom came over after a few minutes and I told her what I'd like to do through him because she's Spanish-speaking and he had to translate, and she said "yeah, go ahead. Put his picture on there if you'd like and it's okay to put the address so they can send books to him."

Spurgeon: Ron posted Mathew's photo and a request for books later that same day. By the next morning, the post had more than 800 likes and several hundred shares.

Lynch: It was totally unexpected. Like I said, I thought we'd get in the neighborhood of 30 to 40 books from my local friends. By the time the books actually got here through the mail anyway, it had over 10,000 likes and 10,000 shares.

Spurgeon: So far, Mathew has added more than 10,000 books to his collection as a result of Ron's Facebook post, but the deluge of support didn't stop there.

Lynch: They kept coming, and not only books, but tablets, gift cards, cash, backpacks with school supplies, clothing, all kinds of things that came in the mail.

Mathew is doing a fantastic job of paying it forward. He's taking the books he's got, all the multiples, and he's doing things with those books that are just incredible to help other children.

Spurgeon: Besides making a meaningful impact in Mathew's life, the experience had a positive influence on Ron's life as well.

Lynch: What I've discovered with this is that there are people that want to do good. There are so many positive things out there that people want to be a part of or that they want to help others. It's a very positive experience. And quite honestly, with the Postal Service, I've found that, by far, 99 to 1 people are happy to see me and like to have a quick little conversation and they're very positive about things.

Spurgeon: While Mathew's story is an example of kindness and support, Ron believes there's a lesson to be learned that goes beyond a single individual.

Lynch: The most important thing that came out of this is that there are people like Mathew everywhere. There are billions of people like that and it's such an easy thing to do which is why I think this caught on so well. You know, we've got many, many used, lots of new as well, but the used ones only cost a little postage and they helped somebody. They helped change a guy's life.

Tillery: The handwritten letter is still a powerful, emotional and attention-getting way to share an important message. A recent letter written by a Glendale, Arizona, letter carrier certainly proved that's true. Peter Hass is here with the story.

Peter Hass: When City Carrier Mike Raymer decided to take pen to paper and write a letter to the customers on his route to let them know he'd decided to retire after 20 years of delivering mail, he didn't expect to be sharing his news with the entire world.

But thanks to one customer who decided to post Raymer's heartfelt letter online, that's exactly what happened.

Raymer's letter somehow touched a nerve with its matter-of-fact genuineness in an age of Twitter and Facebook posts that have little to no thought behind them.

The handwritten letter went viral online. The Daily Mail, a newspaper in London, England, posted a news article about the letter.

Mike Raymer: I've gotten cards from California, Ohio, New York – just cards in the mail saying “Thank you,” “Good job,” “Best wishes.” They were just to “Mike the Mailman” in Glendale, Arizona. It was just neat to see them from all over the country.

Hass: All the online attention led to Phoenix TV reporters interviewing Raymer on his route, and they asked him why he wrote the letter to his 540 customers.

Raymer: I'm old school – I don't believe in emails. I'm not high-tech. I write letters. I just felt that was the best way to let my customers know that when they look out their door in a couple of weeks and see someone else delivering their mail at a different time, they'll know why.

Hass: Raymer's letter to the customers on his last route, some of which he served as long as 13 years, let them know they had been like family to him, particularly during a recent difficult time in his life.

Raymer: Hi. Mike the mailman here. It is with heavy heart that I announce my retirement from the U.S. Postal Service. Twenty years have seemingly flown by. It has been a privilege and a pleasure to have been your letter carrier for the past four years. Many of you have been with me that long, some have not. I have enjoyed getting to know you and hope that I have provided a service to your liking.

I have seen many changes over the years and have enjoyed and endured all of the triumphs and heartaches. I will miss all of you as you have seemed like a second family to me.

I lost my wife of 42 years in September 2014, but I know she would agree that it is time to close this chapter and start a new one. My last day will be Sept. 30, 2015.

I do sincerely wish you and yours all the best.

Michael C. Raymer

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

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