

Your Postal Podcast Version 23 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 Chief Financial Officer Joe Corbett about the Future of the Postal Service. We'll also visit a pet shelter in Arizona to hear how some new postage stamps will bring needed attention to homeless dogs and cats, and you'll hear from the director of a local food bank and a rural letter carrier about this year's annual NALC Food Drive.

(Future of USPS Segment)

There's plenty of talk about the Postal Service in the media, on Capitol Hill and in your workplace. What does the future hold? David Rupert has some insight.

David Rupert: You've heard the news, you've seen the volume and revenue decline, you've listened to the talk. You're probably asking, what is the future of the Postal Service? Here at Your Postal Podcast we went straight to the top. We asked Chief Financial Officer Joe Corbett what he thinks.

Joe Corbett: We'll likely be a smaller organization as mail volumes decline over the next couple of decades. But we'll be a more profitable and financially secure organization as we get the needed changes made over the next coming years.

Rupert: He says we'll make it because America still needs us.

Corbett: We're such an important part of the overall economy and the overall functioning of the U.S. marketplace. There's over \$30 trillion of commerce that goes through the mail each year. And if you just take the mailing industry itself, ourselves as the hub of the mailing industry, and all the other people involved in mail from printers on through advertisers, etc., it's almost a \$1 trillion industry on an annual basis. That's seven percent of the overall country's Gross Domestic Product (GDP). We're just too critical to the overall economy to fail, and that won't be allowed to happen.

Rupert: While many of the decisions will be made by Congress and senior leadership, employees still have a part to play.

Corbett: What you can do, and everyone who works for the Postal Service can do, is focus on your job and your area of responsibility. It's important if you're involved in sales to be innovative, use the flexibility that the Postal Act of 2006 gave us. If you are serving customers, moving the mail, or have some other role in the organization, do it as efficiently as possible. Don't be distracted by the Washington D.C. debates, just focus on the here and now.

Rupert: According to Mr. Corbett, it's in the little things.

Corbett: Maintain quality. Quality of service, we've got to maintain the brand. Right now everywhere we turn people are still very, very comfortable with the way we move the mail, and we've got to continue to do that.

Rupert: He has an encouraging word for all employees.

Corbett: I just hope that all of our employees stay motivated. We do have a bright future. Yes, we've had some tough times in the last couple years, and it will be a couple more, I'll be realistic, it'll be a couple more before we get out of this. But we do have a bright future, and I hope everyone can just stay focused on their part, moving the organization forward.

(Adopt-a-Pet Stamps' Segment)

Watkins: At the end of April, the Postal Service will issue new stamps meant to bring awareness to the thousands of pets in animal shelters across the country looking for good homes. Peter Hass visited a Tucson, Arizona, shelter and found out why officials there think these stamps are the cat's meow.

Natural sound: Cat meowing.

Peter Hass: Five cats and five dogs adopted from an animal shelter in Connecticut will help bring attention to the thousands of loving pets available for adoption all over the country when commemorative stamps featuring their pictures go on sale this month.

Officials at those shelters, like Sheena Stewart, community relations manager for the Tucson-based Humane Society of Southern Arizona, expect the stamps to bring a new wave of awareness about all of their programs -- even though the organization has a long history in the region.

Sheena Stewart: We've been here in Tucson for 65 years. We've recently opened up a new satellite location at the Park Place Mall, so that's exciting that we're spreading awareness to the community and sort of replacing those pet stores into an adoption center, so that's exciting. We're really hoping this stamp brings awareness to the community. Animal shelters are extremely important. We're so much larger than just taking animals off the street and adoption."

Hass: Stewart said the stamps will not only encourage Americans to consider adopting a great companion from animal shelters, but will enlighten the community on other ways they can help.

Stewart: There's always such a huge need. We're run strictly off of the donations that we get in the community and the services that we provide. But given that we take in so many animals and this is such a big facility and it's such a huge problem that we absolutely use volunteers for everything -- from special events to data entry, to dog walking, cat socialization -- I mean literally every aspect, we use volunteers. So, we're hoping this stamp really brings awareness to the nation about animal shelters in general, and how easy it is to help and how big of a difference it will make.

Hass: Television personality Ellen DeGeneres will join Postmaster General Jack Potter to launch the stamps' sales in Los Angeles on April 30th. Information on the new stamps is available at a special postal website -- stampstotherescue.com.

Natural sound: Dog barking.

(Food Drive Segment)

Watkins: Countless Postal Service employees from all functional areas have traditionally supported the annual NALC Food Drive, but this year members of the National Rural Letter Carriers Association will make it official as they become full-fledged partners with the National Association of Letter Carriers. I talked with Michelle Caldwell, the co-director of the Olathe, Kansas, Community Food Pantry, about the need for donations of non-perishable food items, particularly in light of the current economy.

Michelle Caldwell: We have seen an increase in the amount of families we serve every Friday. On average in the last two months we're serving about 125 families every Friday. Growth in numbers in one particular population would be young professionals. That's what I'll hear on the phone because I man the phone. You know "I've got two degrees, or I've got a degree and I can't find a job," and they share with me that they want to work it's just they can't believe they're in this position of needing food -- but that is why we're here.

The other population group that we've seen a rise in is our senior citizens. Again, all it takes is something to go wrong with their car, a unscheduled or unbudgeted visit to the doctor, a new medication, you know something like that, and then again once they've paid all that there's not any, or very little, left for food. The best source of protein for the dollar is beans, dried beans. You can go and actually buy a two-pound bag. If you belong to Sam's Club or Costco you can actually go there and buy them in bulk. And then what our volunteers would then do on Friday would be break that down into a family size portion. Another item that goes a long way is long grain rice, which is extremely helpful.

Watkins: Chris Lucas began his Postal Service career as a rural letter carrier in Las Vegas, Nevada in 2003, and now delivers on his rural route near Overland Park, Kansas. Chris said that he's pleased that he and his fellow rural carriers will partner with their city carrier coworkers to help collect donated food along their delivery routes.

Chris Lucas: Well of course many of my rural carrier coworkers have assisted with the annual Food Drive in the past, but it's nice that we are officially part of the team beginning this year. Between our city and rural carriers -- along with help from our friends in the clerk craft and postal management -- it'll be great to help support the hundreds of local food pantries across America.

(Postal Service Headlines Segment):

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

PMG (Postmaster General) Potter Says the Country Needs and Wants A Strong Postal Service.

As it takes focused steps in its 10-year action plan, "Delivering the Future," the Postal Service will "bump up value" through innovation, service, quality and information to "levels never imagined," Postmaster General Jack Potter pledged on April 12 at the National Postal Forum in Nashville, TN, the mailing industry's annual educational event and tradeshow.

Mr. Potter said that mail will continue to have a great deal of value for businesses and the American people in 2020.

Confident that the country needs and wants a strong and viable Postal Service, Mr. Potter outlined major steps to provide more flexibility in the marketplace. These include expanding retail access into non-postal locations and getting legislation that would permit USPS to explore new products and services — all allowing it to better respond to changing customer needs and compete more effectively.

The Postal Service Will Test Market Direct-Mail Product Sampling in Select Areas Beginning Next Month.

The “Sample Showcase,” a parcel box weighing less than two pounds, will contain an assortment of beauty, health and snack food items from multiple consumer packaged goods companies. The co-op boxes, which will be distributed to more than 200,000 consumers in Charlotte, NC, and Pittsburgh, PA, will be branded with the Postal Service logo and include the tagline “A selection of free product samples.”

The Postal Service will conduct research to determine the cost-effectiveness of the program and the value it provides to manufacturers and consumers.

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.