

Your Postal Podcast 32nd Edition Transcript

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Richard Watkins: Welcome to Your Postal Podcast. This is Richard Watkins with the Postal Service's Office of Corporate Communications. Big changes are coming to the Postal Service, and in this edition, we'll give you all the latest news, plus an inspiring story about an employee who's overcome a potentially career-threatening disability. Also, some insight about the legendary phrase chiseled in stone at the New York City Post Office -- is that really the Postal Service's motto?

The Postal Service has always been a leader in access and opportunity for those with disabilities. But you'll be especially inspired by this story about a Southern California delivery bar code sorter operator who is blind. Laura Dvorak is here with the story.

Laura Dvorak: Automation Clerk Frank Facio begins his work day at Margaret Sellers Processing and Distribution Center. He works on delivery bar code sorter (DBCS) number 32. This is a story about life transitions. Frank, who is 53, learned when he was a teenager that he had Retinitis Pigmentosa, and that with time he would lose his sight completely. He was hired by the Postal Service in 1982 as a letter sorting machine operator in Phoenix. For a while things at work were fine. Then a transition began.

Frank Facio: I first noticed I was having issues with my eyesight when I was working on the LSMs (Letter Sorting Machines) during Christmas. I had difficulty reading the addresses off the colored letters, and so I was taken off the machine and worked on the manual cases after that.

Dvorak: Finally he could no longer see well enough to do the task, but he wanted to continue working. As far as retirement was concerned, it was not an option. Fortunately one of his peers stepped in to help.

Facio: I got a call from one of the union stewards in Arizona named Roger. He called me and asked me to come down to the Post Office to see what kind of work we can find for me back out on the workroom floor. So one of the first things he took me to was the DBCSs, and I knew right then and there that that was going to be the job for me for probably the rest of my postal career.

Dvorak: It took demonstration and persuasion on Frank's part to convince others he could operate the DBCS efficiently. The Post Office had many concerns about Frank operating the machine and working on the workroom floor.

Facio: During that time Joan Ellis and I were able to modify the DBCS by applying Braille to the stackers and to the bread racks. And also marking down a place near there to put various equipment for dispatching to allow me to take the full trays from the machine to the equipment and then of course I take the equipment to where they need to go. One of the most important things that allowed me to become successful on the DBCS was having great communication with my work partner, which allowed me to be safe and productive.

Dvorak: Then Frank decided to move to San Diego to work at the Margaret Sellers Processing Center. This involved another life transition.

Facio: When I was working in Arizona, I had the workroom floor memorized before I lost my eyesight. But when I moved to San Diego my guide dog and myself, we had a whole new set of challenges. We had to learn the building and the workroom floor all over again, and the different areas of the machinery.

Dvorak: When Frank isn't at work, some of his favorite activities are playing beeper baseball, playing base guitar with his country band, reading, and going to the movies.

Facio: Well I just found out that I have a new challenge to come about. I am going to guide dog school again in a couple of weeks to go get a brand new dog. I had to retire my last dog last year quicker than I anticipated. So I'm going to get a brand new dog, which means new challenges, different things that the dog's going to have to learn all over again. He's going to have to learn how to adjust here at the Post Office, but I feel that with all my other dogs that I've had before this one should not be a problem, and being successful here at the Post Office and life itself. Through all of the challenges I have learned that if you believe in yourself and have confidence in yourself, you can do whatever you want.

Watkins: Thank you, Laura -- and if you are sight-impaired, Frank wants to talk with you. Send an e-mail to frank@independentrights.com. And by the way, the music you're hearing, is an original piece from Frank's band.

Does the Postal Service really deliver despite rain, heat or snow? Or is it just a saying inscribed on a building? David Rupert is here with the story.

David Rupert: It's a saying that we sometimes embrace and other times back away from. You've heard it, "Neither snow, nor rain, nor heat, nor gloom of night stays these couriers from the swift completion of their appointed rounds." It shows our resilience. But then other times when the roads are closed and vehicles can't get through, or when downtown is flooded or high winds knock out the power, or a snowstorm shuts down the airport.

Some like to say it's our motto and they hold us to it, but truthfully it's more unofficial than a standard. You see these words were first chiseled over the front of the New York City Main Post Office in 1914, and they stuck. The roots of the phrase actually go back to the writer Herodotus, who was singing the praises of the Persian War couriers in one of his classic books. How did it get to the Post Office? Well, an architect from the firm that designed the New York Post Office was the son of a Greek classic scholar, and an avid reader of the works himself. He picked the inscription from one of the writings, pitched it to postal officials, and later it was chiseled into the marble on the front of the office. So there you have it; no matter what, we still deliver.

Watkins: And now, here's a roundup of recent Postal Service headlines: Postmaster General Patrick Donahoe was officially sworn into office on Jan. 14, and told the Associated Press that the nation's Postal clerks will no longer be required to ask a series of customer questions at the retail service window. The PMG added that some questions will still be needed for security reasons, but clerks no longer have to run through a litany of whether each customer wants a return receipt or insurance or other special services. Mr. Donahoe said that another step to easing the lines is encouraging people to do more postal business away from Post Offices, such as buying stamps online or at retailers.

Already, he said, about 35 percent of retail postal business is conducted outside of the agency's official offices.

The Postal Service was \$8 billion in the red last year despite cutting its workforce by 100,000 over the last three years. Reductions will continue, said Donahoe, who is currently planning to cut 7,500 administrators and supervisors, or about 20 percent of the administrative staff. The briefing came a day after the Postal Service announced that it will increase most rates on April 17, though the 44-cent price of a First-Class stamp will not change. It was also announced that USPS has signed an agreement to expand its deliveries for eBay, the online sales center. It will mean a doubling of the Post Service's current \$700 million in business with the company.

Watkins: Thank you for listening to Your Postal Podcast. Now we'd like to hear from you. Please send your feedback and story ideas to YourPostalPodcast@usps.com. A production of USPS Western Area Corporate Communications, with thanks to Laura Dvorak for her help with this month's podcast. Copyright 2011, All Rights Reserved.