

## Your Postal Podcast 48th Edition Transcript – May 2012

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**Richard Watkins:** Welcome to Your Postal Podcast. This is Richard Watkins of U.S. Postal Service Corporate Communications. In this May twenty-twelve edition, we'll take you to Hawaii, where you'll hear a story that is, quite frankly, nutty. You'll also hear about this month's Stamp Out Hunger Food Drive. The show concludes with our regular look at the latest postal headlines

There's a Postmaster at a remote Hawaiian village that has found a unique way to bolster his mail volume. And his message to the world is, "nuts to you." Here's David Rupert with the story.

### **Coconut Mail Segment**

**David Rupert:** Postmaster Gary Lam serves a community on a Hawaiian island with just seven thousand residents. The island is fifteen by fifty miles long with few visitors, but he's made the very most of this opportunity encouraging tourists to send home a unique piece of the island.

**Gary Lam:** Hoolehua Post Office on the island of Molokai in Hawaii. I've been here a bit over seven years. We keep a supply of coconuts here that are harvested from the old world coconut grove not too far away. We give away the coconuts for free, the people just pay for the postage by weight to mail the coconuts.

**Rupert:** Like most other Post Offices, traditional revenue is down; but Gary's total revenue is up, thanks to some creative marketing.

**Lam:** Customers will come in, they'll decorate the coconut. We have marking pens and paint pens, and some people bring their own supplies -- glitter, nail polish, things like that and whatever messages they would like -- just creating their own post card.

**Rupert:** The story has captured the attention of German and Canadian television, newspapers from around the world, and even the March National Geographic, and now *Your Postal Podcast*. The Post Office is even marked on tourist maps as a destination.

**Lam:** This is a small little out-of-the-way Post Office, but a lot of people come here just for the coconuts. It's something that you don't expect to get in the mail. It's something really unusual. It's very closely tied to Hawaii, of course; it's something tropical and local that they can send anywhere in the world. And people really get a bang out of decorating the coconuts and also the reactions that they get when people receive their coconuts, which are usually pretty spectacular.

**Rupert:** Lam handles about 10 coconuts a day and up to three thousand a year. He estimates that over the years they've sent more than fifty thousand of them. At eight to twenty dollars per coconut, the revenue is significant.

**Lam:** Revenue for the coconuts really makes a difference. It's about 25 percent of my revenue and helps to keep my office open.

**Rupert:** The coconuts are cleared for shipment by Agriculture Department authority.

**Lam:** Rather than send all of my customers down to the local inspector, I've received authorization from the U.S.D.A. to inspect coconuts.

**Rupert:** That's right -- he's a postmaster-slash-coconut inspector and he has the proof.

**Lam:** I have a stamp. (Chuckles.)

**Rupert:** His advice to other offices is to get creative.

**Lam:** I think if every office were able to create \$25,000 in revenue we'd be a lot better off. Find something in your area that you can mail – find something unique.

### **Stamp Out Hunger Food Drive Segment**

**Watkins:** This year, Nick Cannon, multi-talented entertainer and member of the Feeding America Entertainment Council, is the national spokesperson for the Stamp Out Hunger Food Drive, which takes place on May 12th. This is the second year in a row the popular host of NBC's "America's Got Talent" is the celebrity spokesman for the national letter carriers' food drive – which is celebrating its 20th year.

The food drive is particularly meaningful for Cannon, who experienced hunger and visited food pantries as a child. He recorded several public service announcements to help raise awareness for the food drive, including this one being played by radio stations across the country:

**Announcer:** Nearly 49 million Americans including 16 million children are living in homes without enough food. That's why Nick Cannon supports the fight against hunger and the 20th anniversary of the National Association of Letter Carriers annual food drive.

**Nick Cannon:** Growing up I knew first hand what it was like to rely on a food bank for your next meal. Thankfully, I'm now able to give back to those in need and you can too. On Saturday, May 12th, you can help restock the shelves of feeding America food banks in your community by participating in the 20th anniversary of the National Association of Letter Carriers Stamp Out Hunger food drive. Just place a sturdy bag of non-perishable food items like soup, pasta or cereal next to your mailbox before your regular mail delivery and your letter carrier will do the rest. Collecting your donation as they deliver the mail to help the people in need in your local community.

**Announcer:** Remember to help stamp out hunger on Saturday, May 12th. For more information ask your letter carrier. Contact your local post office or visit [helpstampouthunger.com](http://helpstampouthunger.com). A public service message from the National Association of Letter Carriers, Feeding America and this station.

### **News Roundup**

**Watkins:** And now, here's a roundup of recent Postal Service news: A Washington Post story reported that the U.S. Senate moved one step closer on April 25th to overhauling the cash-strapped Postal Service by approving reforms to rebalance the mail agency's finances and help cut the size of its delivery network. The bipartisan measure passed

the Senate 62 to 37 and would give the Postal Service nearly \$11 billion to offer buyouts and early retirement incentives to hundreds of thousands of postal workers and to pay off its debts. Revised estimates on how much the Postal Service owes to federal worker pension accounts have determined that the agency has overpaid its obligations to the fund over several years.

The article said the Senate measure also would permit the end of Saturday mail deliveries in two years, but only after USPS determines it is financially necessary. The bill also modifies mail service standards to ensure that the Postal Service preserves the overnight delivery of mail sent to nearby communities, but allows USPS to slow the delivery of mail destined for destinations farther away.

In a statement, the Postal Service said it was disappointed with the Senate bill because it falls short of its cost-cutting plans. Citing its cash shortfalls, the USPS said it was “inappropriate” to expect it to keep unprofitable facilities open longer than needed. The House of Representatives has yet to vote on any postal legislation.

Thanks for listening to *Your Postal Podcast*. Now, we’d like to hear from you. Please click the “Comments” link on the YourPostalPodcast-dot-com webpage, or email us at YourPostalPodcast at usps-dot-com with feedback or story ideas for future shows. And this month, we’ll select three lucky winners at random from among listeners who comment about this month’s podcast, to receive an official USPS City Letter Carrier bobblehead. Special thanks to Mitch Crane, who provided the music for our coconut mail segment. This has been a production of USPS Western Area Corporate Communications. Copyright 2012, All Rights Reserved.

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