



# LETTERS TO SANTA & THE U.S. POSTAL SERVICE

## The Facts

### Background

As close as we can tell, the Postal Service began receiving letters to Santa Claus more than 100 years ago. However, it was in 1912 that Postmaster General Frank Hitchcock authorized local postmasters to allow postal employees and citizens to respond to the letters in the program that became known as Operation Santa.

In the 1940s, mail volume for Santa increased so much the Postal Service invited charitable organizations and corporations to participate to provide written responses to the letters and small gifts to the children who wrote them.

Over the past 60+ years, the program has taken on a life of its own. Cities around the country today have hugely successful programs working with recognized charitable organizations, major corporations, local businesses and postal employees to make a difference in the lives of children from coast to coast.

The Postal Service and its employees play important roles in communities around the nation. Post Offices are often the only government presence in small towns and in some locations have become the city's center.

Postal employees live in the communities in which they work. Their children attend school there. They shop in the local stores. They eat in the restaurants. They actively participate in community business. It makes perfect sense for postal employees to want to help their fellow citizens, especially around the holiday season.

### What We Do

The Postal Service has programs in operation around the country that vary as much as the locations themselves. Some cities and towns work with their local schools to write letters back to the children as if they were Santa; some work with the established groups and assist with the collection of gifts; and others invite the public to adopt Santa letters to help children and families.

### Letters to Santa

- Hundreds of thousands of children of all ages send letters to "Santa Claus, North Pole Alaska" every year.
- Unless these letters contain a complete Alaska address, they remain in the area they were mailed.
- Postal elves go through the letters and sort out those that wish Santa a happy birthday from those that express serious need.

In 2006, national policy guidelines were created regarding the handling and adoption of letters addressed to Santa. These guidelines were designed to protect the children who wrote to Santa

and mandated that individuals wishing to adopt letters must do so in person, present valid photo identification and fill out a form that included the list of letters being adopted.

New York City's "Operation Santa" program is the largest in the country. They kick their program off the first week of December every year and have tens of thousands of people come in person to adopt letters. They generally receive more than 500,000 letters in that location alone. In New York City, very little has changed, as they have requested this type of information for many years.

In 2009, the Postal Service changed the letter adoption process by blacking out all reference to the child's address and assigning the letter a number. Individuals interested in adopting letters, go to the Post Office, select the letter(s) and sign the form. When the individual is ready to mail something to the child, they return with the letter and present what they are mailing and the letter to the postal employee. The postal employee will match the number on the letter with the child's address, weigh the package, the individual will pay for postage, and a mailing label will be printed and applied to the package without the customer seeing the address.

### **Local Programs**

Historically, post offices around the country have partnered with various groups and organizations for charitable purposes and on community projects that have a positive impact on the community at large and on the residents specifically — our intent is to continue to do so now and in the future.

### **Re-Mailing Program**

People can obtain the North Pole Postmark on a letter from Santa or on holiday greeting cards.

Letter from Santa —

You write a letter to your child and sign it from Santa. You place this letter into an envelope addressed to your child with the return address from SANTA, NORTH POLE. Please make sure you have a First-Class stamp affixed to the envelope. Place that envelope into a larger envelope, with appropriate postage, and address the larger envelope as indicated below.

Holiday greeting cards —

You write your greeting cards like you normally would. You place the cards into their envelopes. Address the envelopes to the people you want to receive them. Place First-Class stamps on the envelopes and either have the return address from the NORTH POLE or from you and your address. Then place the greeting cards into a larger envelope or box, with appropriate postage, and address it to:

NORTH POLE POSTMARK  
POSTMASTER  
4141 POSTMARK DR  
ANCHORAGE AK 99530-9998

The letters from Santa and the greeting cards need to be sent to Anchorage, AK, no later than December 10, 2011.



## People. Community. Social Responsibility.

- The U.S. Postal Service is an essential part of the fabric of the nation. We always have been a welcomed and trusted part of the communities we serve.
- Every year, postal employees around the country put their own lives at risk to save the lives of the customers they serve. In 2010, the Postal Service recognized 239 employee heroes.
- Postal employees pledge an average of \$38 million to the Combined Federal Campaign every year.
- The Postal Service and the National Association of Letter Carriers hold the nations largest one-day food drive. This year, 77.1 million pounds were collected. More than 1.1 billion pounds of food have been collected since it started in 1993.
- The “Have You Seen Me” campaign demonstrates the power of the mail — 149 missing children have been reunited with their families (as of December 2010.)
- Sales of the Breast Cancer Research semi-postal stamp have raised more than \$71.7 million in voluntary contributions for breast cancer research since July 1998.
- The Postal Service, the National Marrow Donor Program and the Be the Match Foundation created the *Delivering the Gift of Life Campaign* 14 years ago. More than 53,000 postal employees and their families have joined the donor registry and many have made life-saving marrow donations.
- Each year, the Postal Service sponsors National Dog Bite Prevention Week — a public safety campaign — to build community awareness concerning animal attacks.
- For the sixth year straight, the Postal Service was rated by the American public as the most trusted federal government organization according to the respected Ponemon Institute.

