



# POSTAL CUSTOMER COUNCIL NEWSLETTER

## Greater Boston PCC Board Members

Timothy O'Connell, Pitney Bowes  
Industry Co-Chair

Joshua Balcunas, USPS  
Postal Co-Chair

Sean Hunt, Jet Mail  
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Jim Burns, Mass General Hospital  
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Elena Elliott, New England Journal  
of Medicine

Mike Fahie, MIT

Christopher Makolandra, The Hanover  
Insurance Group

Jim C. McClymont, Connolly Printing

Bob McGinnity, Harvard Business School

Pat Ring, Boston University Mail Services

Rick Santopietro, PCI

Mike Shields, ShieldsGraphix

Ken Toy, Harvard University

Debra L. Visco, New England Journal  
of Medicine

Alice K. Gordon, Emeritus

Karen McCormick, Emeritus

Sarah Etro, USPS

George Kippenhan, USPS

Alison Maher, USPS

## **PCC SPOTLIGHT**

### **WELCOME TO OUR NEW BOARD MEMBERS**

The Greater Boston Postal Customer Council was graced this year with the addition of four talented leaders who bring new ideas, energy and a can-do approach to the tasks at hand. We are thrilled to have them as they expand and refresh our excellent Executive Board.

As chance would have it, two work in industry and two work for USPS.



**Sarah A. Etro,**  
USPS Marketing/Recruitment



**Alison Maher,** Retail and  
Delivery Project Manager, USPS



**Chris Makolandra,**  
The Hanover Insurance Group



**Rick Santopietro,**  
PCI



**Sarah A. Etro**, USPS Marketing/Recruitment, began her postal career in May 2006 as a PTF Carrier in Hyannis, MA. In November 2014 Sarah advanced in her career to a leadership position at the Harwich Post Office which also led to management positions in Hyannis, Edgartown and Marstons Mills. By 2018, Sarah was promoted to Postmaster in Marstons Mills and in 2022 to Postmaster in Mattapoisett. For the past 3 years, Sarah has been the Campaign Manager for the Combined Federal Campaign for the MA/RI District raising over a hundred thousand dollars for a variety of charities. Sarah has also participated in recruitment, retention and marketing initiatives for the Postal Service during the past 4 years, holding hundreds of recruitment events across Massachusetts and Rhode Island. In addition,

Sarah has played a vital role on numerous special teams and projects, most notably the planning of the PMG visit for PCC Day in September 2023.



**Alison Maher**, Retail and Delivery Project Manager, USPS, began her postal career in December 1993 as a Christmas Casual. She has 20 years of experience working in customer service and delivery operations. Her first managerial position was in 2016 as a Supervisor, Customer Service in Brockton. In 2019 she was promoted to Postmaster of Norwell. Alison has held several leadership positions in Human Resources in the MA/RI District; these include Manager of Safety, Manager of Employee Development and Manager of Occupational Health Claims. In July 2023 she was awarded the position of Retail Project Manager. Alison is a graduate of the Managerial Leadership Program (MLP) and is yellow-belt certified.



**Chris Makolandra** has worked at Hanover Insurance since December 2014, starting as a Team Lead, then receiving promotions to Supervisor in November 2017 and Business Operations Manager in 2020. Recently he moved over to the Print and Machine Insertion Operations in March 2023. Chris has almost 16 years of Print and Mail experience under his belt, starting with the Allied Group in Cumberland, RI in 2008 as a Machine Operator and Mail Production Specialist. Chris recently joined the Greater Boston PCC after several years on the Central Mass PCC Board, Not only is Chris an experienced PCC Board member, he has twice won Industry Person of the Year - in 2018 and again in 2020.



**Rick Santopietro** is a seasoned Business Development Executive in the print and mail industry with over 30 years of experience. He's renowned for his track record of driving sales growth, forging strong client relationships, and introducing innovative solutions to clients across the country. His expertise and strategic vision make him a valuable asset in this ever-evolving field. He is a results-driven Print and Mail Business Development Executive who stands ready to elevate companies' print and mail operations. Rick has worked for Pitney Bowes, Office Max and several other print/mail firms prior to joining PCI.

## MIKE RAKES APPOINTED TO NATIONAL POSTAL CUSTOMER COUNCIL ADVISORY COMMITTEE BOARD



In November 2023, the National PCC Program Office selected new members to join the PCC Advisory Committee Board. This is the group that is committed to supporting and growing the PCC network throughout the United States. It is an honor to be selected for this position and we are proud of our District Manager for his new (additional) role on the national scene.

Mike is currently the District Manager for the Massachusetts and Rhode Island District, with responsibility for all post office operations, retail, and delivery across both states. Mike's oversight includes over 11,000 employees and 650 Post Offices.

Mike has over 28 years of service with the United States Postal Service.

He began his career as a letter carrier in 1996 in the Boston Area. Eventually, he was promoted into the management ranks of the Postal Service where he has held numerous supervisory, Postmaster, and Plant Manager positions.

Mike has held several executive positions over his 28-year career throughout the Postal Service, including Plant Manager of the Providence Plant, Senior Plant Manager of the Greater Boston District, acting Manager Operations Support for the Northeast Area and eventually returning to Massachusetts in his current role.

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## WITH APPRECIATION TO DEB VISCO



Few people do more for the Greater Boston PCC than Debra Visco. Deb brings her extensive knowledge (she holds 6 industry certifications!) and outstanding management skills to many aspects of GBPCC's Executive functions. Often, she accomplishes these in the background, without fanfare or acknowledgment. As an example, among her many contributions, Deb has been responsible for managing GBPCC's website for many years. She does all that she does for the PCC while doing her demanding job as Director of Distribution & Postal Affairs at the New England Journal of Medicine.

Knowing that Deb loves stamps, the PCC Executive Board decided to show our appreciation for her contributions with a plaque of Transcontinental Railroad stamps, one of her favorites.

# OPERATION SANTA: GBPCC MAKES WISHES COME TRUE



Over 100 years ago, the Postal Service – then the Post Office Department – began receiving letters addressed to “Dear Santa.” Postal employees were granted permission to open, read and respond to these letters and Operation Santa was launched! In the 1940s, mail volume swelled, and USPS invited the public to help by writing responses and providing small gifts. The program grew over the years and in 2017, Operation Santa went digital. Individuals and organizations can now adopt letters online and ship gifts in Santa’s place.

Under the leadership of Karen McCormick, the Greater Boston Postal Customer Council has supported Operation Santa for the past four years. Karen organizes the enterprise by adopting letters from children in Massachusetts and across the United States, collecting funds, shopping, wrapping and shipping. As we all know, this is no small task! This year’s wish list included Barbie cars, dolls, clothes; Hot Wheels cars, trucks, and racetrack; science sets; jewelry makers; Play Doh; Legos; Gabby dolls and playhouses; cooking toys and a cotton candy maker. We are so happy to make children happy!

Additional information on the holiday program is available at [USPS Operation Santa®](https://www.usps.com/operation-santa) | [USPS](https://www.usps.com)

## Massachusetts/Rhode Island District 3-PEATS as National Champions of Sales of Breast Cancer Research Stamps

The Massachusetts-Rhode Island District has repeated their achievement of the last two years. The District led the Nation in selling Breast Cancer Research Postal stamp sales, collecting more than \$733,000 in revenue. The District outperformed second place by over \$500,000.



Boston Postmaster and PCC Co-chair Joshua Balcunas purchasing books of Breast Cancer Research Stamps from the West Somerville Retail Team

“It’s a tribute to our employees. They go above and beyond for this important cause every year,” stated Acting Postmaster of Boston and Greater Boston Postal Customer Council Co-Chair Joshua Balcunas.

A Greater Boston PCC Executive Board Member declared, “Mike Rakes (District Manager) and Joshua Balcunas really inspire all of us to give that extra effort. Even one stamp purchased goes towards research.”

When you see pink in the retail lobbies next year, please make sure to purchase a Breast Cancer Research stamp and support all the fighters out there.



# USPS ANNOUNCES

## “A History of the Postal Service” ... for Kids!

WASHINGTON, DC — The U.S. Postal Service is offering a new activity book to teach kids about postal history. *A Kids’ History of the United States Postal Service* is a colorful, 40-page booklet full of historic facts, photos and stories about the U.S. Mail and the people (and animals!) who kept it moving. The new publication is illustrated throughout with archival photographs and drawings.

Starting with the American Revolution and continuing through the present day, *A Kids’ History* combines the Postal Service’s rich history with activities and fun facts.

Some of the activities, like word games, puzzles and mazes, can challenge a young person’s skills. Others, like addressing an envelope or making a paper airplane, teach life skills and encourage creativity. Children can express their artistic talents by designing their own pretend postage stamp, while teachers might use the booklet in lessons about history, geography, writing, and math.

“We hope this book helps to teach kids about the important role the Postal Service played in uniting the nation. Even in this digital age, the Postal Service still connects us, just as it has for nearly 250 years,” Judy de Torok, Corporate Affairs Vice President, said in announcing the book.

The new activity book, created by Jenny Lynch, the USPS historian, and her team, is available now online.

Creating the book was “a labor of love,” Lynch said. “We had fun thinking about USPS history from a kid’s perspective — how to tell the most essential parts of our story, while keeping young readers engaged.”

*We recommend you download A Kids’ History of the United States Postal Service.* It’s free on the USPS website. See <https://about.usps.com/publications/pub100k.pdf>

***Our PCC checked it out. Did you know ...***

- ***USPS is the largest communication network in the world?***
- ***That Abraham Lincoln was a Postmaster in Salem, Illinois?***
- ***That mailboxes, when they were first introduced in cities, were attached to lampposts?***
- ***That most rural letter carriers are women?***
- ***That a dog was THE letter carrier between two locations in the 1880’s?***

***This book is not to be missed for both education and fun.***

## Greater Boston PCC on LITE 105



Matty Blake and George Kippenhan

On Tuesday, November 7, George Kippenhan, Greater Boston Postal Customer Council Executive Board Member, appeared on Lite 105's #1-rated morning radio show "Heather and Matty". George was on the air to surprise and pay tribute to one of his oldest friends Matty Blake. Matty is a loyal USPS user and host of one of the most popular and longest-running cable television shows, "The Curse of Oak Island: Drilling Down." November 7th was its Season 11 premiere.

George had a special gift made by his friend in Los Angeles, artist Rob Botts (RobBottsToons on Instagram). Rob makes custom pop-culture art on request. To surprise Matty, George thought it would be fun to have Matty's all-time favorite band, The Black Crowes, play on the mysterious Oak Island. Rob created the piece, had it mounted, and sent it to George (Ground Advantage, of course). George got in contact with Heather, Matty's Lite 105 morning co-host, to arrange the surprise on the premiere of Season 11.

George entered the studio during a commercial break to Matty's astonishment. A very confused Matty watched as Heather came back from commercial and introduced George who spoke about Matty's kindness to the community through the years. Matty's charitable contributions are done behind the scenes with no fanfare and no social media acknowledgement. He does it out of the sheer goodness of his heart. As a thank you to his kindness and best wishes for a successful new season of Oak Island, the custom art was presented to Matty on behalf of Heather, Rob Botts Toons, and the Greater Boston Postal Customer Council. An emotional Matty stated that he had no words. He always had dreams of the Black Crowes playing on Oak Island and now he had a beautiful art piece of this dream.



Matty, George and Heather

It did not end there. To top off the wonderful morning, George thanked Heather and Matty for bringing such joy to so many on their morning commute. In a very tough and challenging world to navigate, they bring us what we need most - laughter. George announced the Greater Boston Postal Customer Council will be donating \$100 to the Hasbro Children's Hospital in the name of Heather and Matty. They were both touched and thanked the Greater Boston Postal Customer Council on the air as well as on their Facebook and Instagram pages. It was a wonderful and fulfilling visit for all involved. Heather and Matty will be appearing on the Greater Boston award-winning Celebrity Video Podcast in January 2024.

# HONORING OUR VETERANS, UPHOLDING TRADITION

For many years, the Greater Boston PCC has held a stamp dedication on Veterans Day at the VA Hospital in Boston. This annual event, coordinated for the past 7 years by Mike Shields, PCC Executive Board member and former Co-Chair, is a highlight of the year for the Greater Boston PCC.

This year was no exception. Postmaster of Boston (A) and Greater Boston Postal PCC Co-Chair Joshua Balcunas was the guest speaker at the VA Hospital in West Roxbury. Along with special guest Director of Veteran Affairs, Vincent Ng, Postmaster Balcunas held a special stamp dedication of the 2023 Flag stamp in front of a room of veterans and employees of the hospital. During his wonderful speech, Postmaster Balcunas spoke about his father and his continued use of the VA facilities and programs.

What was different this year was the absence of Al Silverstein (Al passed away in June), former PCC Co-Chair, long-time Executive Board member and devoted participant in the VA event. Al's passion was wood carving and each year, Al made pens to give out to veterans at each PCC VA event. This year, Al's last group of hand-crafted pens were handed out to every veteran in attendance. Knowing this was the last set of pens, Joshua, Mike and the PCC Executive Board wanted to make sure they were delivered to veterans at the VA Hospital. It was an emotional moment for Mike Shields (see photo) as he handed out the last pen made by Al.



Mike Shields presents Al Silversteins last pen



Acting Postmaster Balcunas delivers a speech to the veterans and hospital employees



Acting Postmaster Balcunas and Director of Veteran Affairs Vincent Ng unveil the special 2023 flag stamp.



Mike Shields, Joshua Balcunas and Vincent Ng



Veterans and VA Hospital employees enjoy the presentations

# SENIORS, USPS and the GREATER BOSTON PCC STAMP DEDICATION at BRAINTREE DEPARTMENT OF ELDER AFFAIRS



Pictured are Mayor Kokoros, George Kippenhan and Carol Kippenhan, George's Mom (a former USPS employee) who enjoys the daily activities that the Senior Center offers.

By popular demand, the Braintree Department of Elder Affairs invited the Greater Boston PCC to their Holiday Party at the Senior Center on Tuesday, December 12 at 1:00 PM to present the new USPS Holiday stamp. The group remembered the visit to the Senior Center by George Kippenhan from his "Grandparent's Day" presentation in April and wanted a return engagement.

The Mayor of Braintree, Charles Kokoros, unexpectedly made an appearance and helped with the dedication. He spoke highly of the Postal Service and of the PCC. Mayor

Kokoros was particularly impressed that this was the second time this year that the PCC held an event at the Senior Center and praised the PCC for caring so much about the community.

The connection between our senior citizens, USPS and the Greater Boston PCC promises to be ongoing as seniors especially appreciate the mail and some are even retired Postal workers.

At the December 12 dedication, George presented a commemorative plaque with the Holiday Snow Globe stamp.

The plaque was inscribed:

**Braintree Department of Elder Affairs,  
Special Stamp Dedication**

**Greater Boston Postal Customer  
Council, December 12, 2023**





## A VERY SPECIAL PEN PAL ADRIANNA AND THE POSTMASTER GENERAL

The letter and CD that Postmaster General Louis DeJoy sent to our PCC Day vocalist, 13-year-old Adrianna Kunevich, was not the end of their correspondence.

Adrianna just received another personalized message from PMG Louis DeJoy with a photo of Adrianna and her parents with the PMG taken on PCC Day. Imagine how thrilled she and her family were to receive it! They promptly went out to get a frame to hang the photo next to her first letter from the Postmaster General and next to the stamp art which she received for being a guest vocalist on PCC Day.



A very special envelope from the PMG to Adrianna



## PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT: MAILPIECE DESIGN PROFESSIONAL CERTIFICATION

The MDP is the only mailpiece design certification program approved by the United States Postal Service. This self-paced course is ideal for mail preparers who wish to maximize their proficiency in designing letter-size and flat-size mail to meet USPS standards and obtain certification as a Mailpiece Design Professional.

The 4-hour session will be at Harvard University on **March 14, 2024**

For more information and to register, go to at <https://www.bostonpcc.org/event-5490137>

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**GREATER BOSTON  
POSTAL CUSTOMER COUNCIL**



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**JOIN THE GBPCC**

The Greater Boston Postal Customer Council (GBPCC) is a United States Postal Service (USPS) sponsored organization comprised of a local network of business mailers, mail service providers and USPS representatives. GBPCC offers opportunities to participate in educational programs, networking events and discussions focused on changing postal regulations, rates and local/national mailing issues. If you are interested in becoming a member please use

**MEMBERSHIP RESPONSE FORM**

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## COMING ATTRACTIONS

**\* MAILPIECE DESIGN PROFESSIONAL CERTIFICATION**

**March 14, 2024 8:00 AM Harvard University**

**Register at <https://www.bostonpcc.org/Events>**

**\* Celebrity Podcasts in February and March**

**\* Golf in April**

**\* Scavenger Hunt May 16th 2024 5:00 PM Beantown Pub Register at**

**<https://www.bostonpcc.org/Events>**

**\* RED SOX in June**

**\* More to follow ...**

For more information about the Greater Boston PCC, visit us at: [www.bostonpcc.org](http://www.bostonpcc.org)