

# Delivering some Christmas cheer

Monday was expected to be the busiest mailing day of the year.

By DAVID HARPER  
World Staff Writer

On the classic television sitcom "Seinfeld" the beleaguered and often agitated mail carrier Newman complained: "The mail never stops. It just keeps coming and coming and coming, there's never a let-up. It's relentless. Every day it piles up more and more and more!"

Monday, it piled higher than it does on any other day on the calendar.

The U.S. Postal Service reported that Monday was expected to be the busiest mailing day of the year, with more than 900 million items placed in the mail stream.

Of that total, about 280 million cards, packages and letters were expected to be sent nationally, nearly three times the total for an average day.

Beth Fisk, a U.S. Postal Service customer relations coordinator in Tulsa, said Monday that more than 1.2 million items were expected to be canceled in Tulsa by the end of the day.

Among those waiting in line at the post office in the Page Belcher Federal Building, 333 W. Fourth St., was Pat Morgan of Tulsa.

Morgan said she stood in line for about 12 to 14 minutes Monday waiting to send Christmas packages.

Still, she said she was amazed that the wait time wasn't longer. "I was pleasantly surprised," she said.

The line moved a lot slower when she visited the same post office Wednesday, she said, add-



JAMES GIBBARD / Tulsa World

Russell Gee from Tulsa walks to the U.S. post office at Utica Square to mail parcels.

ing that she waited 35 minutes for her turn. One person took six minutes to conduct a transaction, she said.

Morgan said one reason for the difference may have been that a third clerk was working at the counter Monday.

The spirit of the holidays permeated the downtown post office even though it was curiously bereft of holiday decorations and music — Marvin Gaye's "Let's Get It On" played over the public address system.

Donnie Caddy of Tulsa — who was waiting to send three Christmas packages — demon-

strated the spirit of the season by allowing a woman with simpler business to transact to get in front of her in the line.

Caddy said she usually doesn't wait this long to do her holiday mailing and was happy to get into a line that had only a few people in it.

One man, who would only identify himself as "Mr. Smith" because he said he was supposed to be at work, expressed similar sentiments.

"Smith" said he had originally stopped at a UPS store to send a holiday package, only to see a line so long that he didn't even

bother to get in it.

"Chalk up one for the Postal Service," he said.

Like the tide, a postal line ebbs and flows. By late afternoon, the line at the same post office was almost out the door.

Although Monday might have been the day to drop things into the mail, Wednesday will be the day your mail box may be full to bursting with holiday good cheer.

Postal authorities say that Wednesday will be the busiest delivery day of the year, meaning that the average postal carrier will be feeling like Santa on Christmas morning by the time the work shift is over.

Although the fictional Newman had a terrible attitude about his job, a local postal union official said real-life letter carriers are happy to rise to the challenges the Christmas season present.

National Association of Letter Carriers Branch 1358 President John Harrison said the 601 members of his union who live around Tulsa are fully aware of their responsibilities this time of year and accept them cheerfully.

Harrison said letter carriers are happy to do their part to contribute toward joyous holiday celebrations. He said they take pride in making sure the right card gets in the right box in time for Christmas.

Harrison said the mood among letter carriers is actually upbeat in December despite the workload.

"People are jovial this time of year," he said. "They've got their job to do. It's what they're paid to do, and they do it."

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## DRESS:

A contract was approved to provide school-based mental health and social services to Eugene Field Elementary.

FROM A-13

Board members also agreed to participate in an effort to obtain a commitment from Oklahoma's congressional delegation to help endorse the Pledge to America's Schoolchildren, a project to help students receive the highest

quality education, and help make certain that schools continue to fulfill their role in their communities.

In other business, the board approved the renewal of a contract with the David L. Moss Correctional Center to provide educational services to eligible students residing at the facility during the current school year, at no cost to the district.

Approved a contract with Youth Services of Tulsa to provide school-based comprehensive mental health and social services to Eugene Field Elementary School from Dec. 19 to June 30, 2007, at no cost to the district.

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## CREEK:

The court based its ruling on the agency's procedures, which it called "flawed."

FROM A-13

hasn't been altered and its water hasn't been polluted.

However, the court's decision to ban trout was not based on environmental concerns. Instead, the courts focused on a technicality in how the Wildlife Department changed its rules to allow trout into the stream.

State law required the department to collect public comments before it changed the rules. The

Spring Creek coalition argued that officials ignored overwhelmingly negative comments.

The appeals court wrote, "The process employed here is inherently flawed ... and essentially renders the hearings for public comment a nullity."

Spring Creek was first stocked with trout more than two years ago, but officials believe the fish have died out.

In theory, the Wildlife Department could call new public hearings and restart the process to change its rule and, ultimately, allow the creek to be stocked again. But the Spring Creek coalition promises to fight any such move.

Wildlife Department officials could not be reached Monday.

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## CRIME:

Tulsa once was on pace to record more than 100 homicides in 2006.

FROM A-13

Violent crime rates in Oklahoma City and Norman, the only other Oklahoma communities tracked by the report, were down.

Driven by gang violence earlier in the year, Tulsa once was on pace to record more than 100 homicides in 2006.

The city averages 45 to 50 homicides a year. Its record was set in 2003, when 69 people were killed in the city.

Been said it isn't an accident that that crime rate has come more under control.

A concerted effort to address gang crimes in cooperation with federal prosecutors and targeting armed robberies have paid off with improved crime statistics in

the city, he said.

"In this last six or eight months, we've done a tremendous job of dropping the crime rate," Been said. "What we looked at in January were some gang issues that were quickly brought to order."

Tulsa is a small enough city that a few criminals can drive up the crime rate, Been said. Arresting one accused serial rapist and three groups of armed robbers — totaling eight or nine people — has made a strong impact, he said.

Nationally, the FBI reported a 3.7 percent increase in violent crime between January and June.

Property crimes like auto theft and other larcenies were down nationally by 2.6 percent over the same six-month period, data show. In Tulsa, property crime was down by 1.8 percent.

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The Associated Press contributed to this story.

FBI's Semiannual Uniform Crime Report: <http://www.fbi.gov/ucr/prelim06/index.html>

## TAR:

Sen. Jim Inhofe has pledged to secure all the federal money needed for the buyout.

FROM A-13

available if funding is delayed," Strong said.

Known as the Lead-Impacted Communities Relocation Assistance Trust, the relocation committee met Monday night and was expected to discuss the buyout's progress. Cinnabar is expected to complete about 70 appraisals a month.

The relocation committee has \$18.8 million on hand to begin the first phase of the buyout. The buyout is expected to cost an estimated \$40 million.

Those being bought out first involve a list of 100 homes situated above abandoned mining works with a potential to col-

lapse. In total, an estimated 300 homes, businesses and public-use facilities are expected to be bought out in the first phase.

Cinnabar Service Co. was the low bidder to appraise properties to be bought by the relocation committee. Smith-Roberts Land Services was the high bidder at \$3.7 million, Strong said.

Sen. Jim Inhofe has pledged to secure all the federal money needed to fully fund the buyout.

"We have not expressed any concern yet about there not being enough money," Strong said. "We are optimistic that Sen. Inhofe can get the necessary funding."

The relocation committee will buy qualifying homes and businesses based on the fair market value of the structures if they were located outside the Superfund site, Strong said.

Once the sale is completed, the committee will dispose of the property to the best possible public benefit, Strong said.

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## EDUCATION

### Key position filled at Southeastern

Southeastern Oklahoma State University has named Jesse O. Snowden, vice president for academic affairs, as its interim president.

Snowden will take on the interim post in mid-January, according to a press release. Former President Glen D. Johnson was named higher education chancellor Dec. 5 by the State Regents for Higher Education.

Snowden has been vice president since 1999, the press release said. He has worked in faculty and administrative roles at five other colleges and universities since he began his career 44 years ago. He has a doctorate in geology from the University of Missouri.

SEOSU regents, administrators, faculty, students, alumni and community members will serve on the presidential search committee, said Regional University System of Oklahoma Executive Director Sheridan McCaffree. Regents will meet Jan. 19 to decide whether to conduct a nationwide search.

The first step toward picking a president is assessing the state of the university to see what kind of president it needs, McCaffree said. The job will be advertised, the search committee will recommend candidates to the board of regents, and the regents will interview finalists and name a president.

### OU grid player fills yet another role

The University of Oklahoma football defensive tackle who became his brother's guardian in June gave the OU College of Arts and Sciences convocation speech on Saturday.

Carl Pendleton graduated this semester with a bachelor's degree in sociology and a minor in religious studies, according to a press release. He is passing up his senior season of football to concentrate on graduate school as well as raising his adopted younger brother, Kierstan, 11.

He received an \$18,000 National Football Foundation and College Hall of Fame scholarship, which he plans to use to pursue a master's degree in education at OU, the press release said.

Pendleton is a youth minister at Journey Church in Norman and president and frequent speaker for the Fellowship of Christian Athletes, the release said.

When his parents began to divorce this summer, he became Kierstan's guardian.

"What happens too often is that people put their dreams in front of others," he said in the release. "In reality, your decisions affect so many others, and I decided to act accordingly."

### Langston grant expected to boost economy

Langston University has received a federal grant that it plans to use to incubate existing retail businesses in the town of Langston, expand its ability to help the town develop economically and help low- and moderate-income Oklahoma City residents.

Linda Tillman, project director at LU, expects to receive the \$587,806 grant from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development by the end of the year. It is among \$10.4 million in grants awarded to 13 historically black colleges and universities to "stimulate economic and community development activities," according to HUD's Web site.

In Langston, five LU students and a professor will be paid to help develop fledgling businesses, including a beauty shop, a general store and a clothing store, Tillman said. She expects the project to have a major impact, because the town has few retailers.

In Oklahoma City, LU will help provide housing counseling, loss-mitigation counseling to those going through foreclosure, and job training and placement to low-income residents, with a focus on the 3,000 Hurricane Katrina evacuees living in the area, Tillman said.

From staff reports



Audrey Byrd (center), a fourth-grader at Carnegie Elementary School in Tulsa, is honored Monday in Oklahoma City for a winning poster entry in the Oklahoma Heritage Association's annual Heritage Week competition. Presenting the award are association President Shannon L. Nance (left) and Louise Painter.

TY RUSSELL / For the Tulsa World

## Tulsa girl among winners in heritage poster contest

By BARBARA HOBEROCK  
World Capitol Bureau

OKLAHOMA CITY — A Tulsa fourth-grader was honored Monday at the Capitol for her winning poster entry in the Oklahoma Heritage Association's annual Heritage Week competition.

The student — Audrey Byrd, 9, who attends Carnegie Elementary School — won first place in the Tulsa County division. She is the daughter of Wes and Kim Byrd.

Audrey was one of more than 20 students from around the state honored in the contest.

The competition's goal is to encourage students in fourth through 12th grades to embrace and honor their heritage.

Audrey's poster depicted several panels, including the state seal, a wagon, a picture of Oklahoma and boots.

"I was really excited because I never have really won an art contest before," she said. "I thought it was kind of cool I actually did."

Her favorite subject is art. She hopes to become a pediatrician, she said.

One of Audrey's teachers, Dana Corn, said she integrates art into her social studies lessons.

The students look forward to it, and

it reinforces what they are learning, she said.

Association President Shannon L. Nance said, "By encouraging students to explore the state's history and discover how rich and exciting it can be, we hope to inspire in them a strong desire to become part of that history."

Students in fourth through sixth grades entered the poster competition. Their works had to depict historical state events that have shaped Oklahoma's heritage.

Students in seventh through ninth grades had an essay competition, in which they were to describe an individual from their county who made an impact on local and state history.

Students in 10th through 12th grades had to submit both a poster and an essay illustrating and describing how the state Capitol is a symbol of Oklahoma and how that symbolism relates to their own lives.

For more information about the Oklahoma Heritage Association or the 2007 Oklahoma Heritage Week competition, call (888) 501-2059 or go online to [www.oklahomaheritage.com](http://www.oklahomaheritage.com).

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