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For Immediate Release

McKeesport Postal Carrier Wins Award

“Western Pennsylvania Postal Carrier of the Year” Awarded by Carnegie Library for the Blind and Physically Handicapped

(Pittsburgh, PA—March 6, 2007) McKeesport Postal Carrier Kevin Zaken has been named the 2006 “Western Pennsylvania Postal Carrier of the Year” by Carnegie Library for the Blind and Physically Handicapped (LBPH). The award will be presented at 9:00 a.m. Wednesday, March 14 at the McKeesport Post Office, 850 Walnut Street, by LBPH Director Kathleen Kappel. McKeesport Postmaster Bill Mueller will also present Mr. Zaken with a certificate of appreciation from the United States Postal Service at the ceremony.

Mr. Zaken was nominated for the Postal Carrier Award by Mrs. Mary Cole, a White Oak resident and library customer with macular degeneration, for his exceptional consideration when making Mrs. Cole’s mail deliveries.

LBPH provides audio books and magazines, large print books, and described videos by mail postage-free to readers with visual and physical disabilities in 36 counties of Western Pennsylvania. Braille is also part of the program. Reading materials are sent via the U.S. Postal Service and accurate, timely mail delivery is a critical component of the library’s service. The award was given for outstanding service in delivering LBPH materials to customers.

Mrs. Cole's nomination, written by her husband John, reads, "We are very fortunate to have such a pleasant and caring mailman." It continues, "My wife, Mary Cole, has macular degeneration and relies on the audio book tapes we receive from the Library for the Blind and Physically Handicapped. We usually order about 10 at a time for her 'reading' pleasure."

The Coles explain that when the many tapes arrive, Mr. Zaken first bands them together in packets of about 4 each to make them easier to handle. Then, rather than leaving them "crammed into the mail box located at street level" he places the bundles in a mail basket and carries them up the steps to their house, presenting them in person. If the Coles are not home, he places the basket by their front door and also leaves a note about the tapes in their mailbox. These simple, thoughtful acts are greatly appreciated by the Coles who conclude, "Kevin is courteous and a gentleman."

LBPH, which shipped 623,000 items to Western Pennsylvanians last year, is part of a nationwide network of libraries, the National Library Service for the Blind and Physically Handicapped (NLS). This division of the Library of Congress provides free reading materials by mail to individuals with visual or physical disabilities throughout the United States. March, 2007 marks 76 years since the passage of the Pratt-Smoot Act by Congress which established NLS. Containers with audio, Braille, and large print books are marked "Free Matter for the Blind or Handicapped" and circulate to virtually every part of the United States. Together NLS and the United States Postal Service form a partnership to ensure that readers with disabilities have access to a large selection of books and magazines.

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