

Letter carriers: The face of USPS and its advertising

When you see a Postal Service advertisement on television or the internet, you might think that the people portraying letter carriers and other postal employees delivering the mail with a smile are just professional actors, paid to play a part. But, you're seeing real postal employees, just like you, doing their jobs, and they all got their parts by answering a USPS casting call.

The latest casting call was sent out in August in the Postal Service's *Link* newsletter and other outlets, and is for employees to appear in ads that will run on TV and online in December, for the holiday season. The audition process is open to all employees, and no prior experience is required.

"The best way for the Postal Service to tell its story of transformation and service to the nation is through our employees—who make all of what this organization does possible," USPS brand shipping director La Tonia Simmons said. "Maybe one of those faces and voices is yours."

Though the holiday casting call ends Sept. 4, USPS shoots many ads and accepts cast applications for them year-round, so your chance could be next.

The Postal Record talked to a few letter carriers who have appeared in USPS ads about the experience.

Caitlin Caputo got her moment in the sun after years of trying, fulfilling a childhood dream.

"Since I was a kid," she said, "I wanted to be a model but didn't think I had a shot."

Caputo, a member of Buffalo-Western New York Branch 3, applied four years ago to act in a USPS commercial after seeing a notice from USPS that her branch president had posted on Facebook. She wasn't chosen. She tried again a few years later. Finally, after



Christine Maldonado (above) and her cousin Stephanie Maldonado (below) have appeared in advertising for USPS.

applying a third time last December, her number came up.

Following the instructions in the Postal Service's call for talent, Caputo emailed a head shot and a video to USPS. In the video, as instructed, she gave her name, hometown and her favorite part of working for USPS, and she made her best surprised face.

When USPS picked her for a new ad, she was flown out to the Los Angeles area to shoot the commercial. USPS finally saw that she had what it takes, she said. "I'm always smiling," Caputo said. "Just a friendly person. I feel like I have the energy that attracts people."

The experience was right out of the movies, she said, from being picked up



USPS advertising (continued)



To audition, Caitlin Caputo had to email a video of herself to USPS saying her name, hometown and her favorite part of working as a letter carrier.

by a driver at the airport holding up a sign with her name to getting fitted for a “costume”—a postal uniform, of course—before the shoot. “They even had the real Hollywood chairs on the set,” she said.

On the day before shooting, Caputo was fitted for the uniform, and the next day at 6 a.m. she went to the set for hair and makeup before playing her role for the camera. She had no lines in the ad, so she didn’t have to memorize any. She performed her small part in the ad—delivering mail to a jewelry store—in several takes. “You do it four or five different times until it’s how they want it,” she said.

The ad she appeared in was a Spanish-language spot that aired on YouTube TV. Like all postal employees who appear in USPS ads, Caputo was paid the standard Screen Actors Guild – American Federation of Television and Radio Artists (SAG-AFTRA) wages for her work.

Caputo said she loved the friendly USPS and video production staff that worked with her.

“It was hands down the best experience I’ve ever had,” she said. “I’d do it again in a heartbeat.”

The carrier also enjoyed making new friends among the other postal employees in the ad from across the country, including **Christine Maldonado** of West Palm Beach, FL Branch 1690.

USPS used footage of Maldonado driving an LLV in the ad with Caputo and in a few other ads. Maldonado had responded to a casting call last October.

“I submitted the video and then I forgot all about it,” Maldonado said, until USPS called her in January and asked her to come to Los Angeles with only three days’ notice.

“Everything happened so fast,” she said.

Once she arrived, Maldonado got a firsthand look at how ads are made.

“It was just like being on a movie set,” she said, complete with trailers for her and fellow actors to have hair and makeup done and to change into their costumes. “I wasn’t used to that. It was a great experience to see what that was like.”

Maldonado drove an LLV on a closed street for the production, and though it was winter, the shot was depicting warmer weather, so she had to wear a light uniform. “It was very, very cold,” she said, “and I couldn’t wear a jacket.”

She was impressed by how much work it took just to shoot a short segment of the ad. “They would retake and retake and retake,” she said, “until they got the perfect shot.”

“My favorite part was being on the set and seeing the background of everything and all the equipment they use—being able to be there and witness everything,” she added.

Maldonado auditioned when her cousin, **Stephanie Maldonado**, said she should try it. Stephanie, who is also a Branch 1690 member, had appeared in the 2021 holiday ad.

“I almost didn’t audition, but at the last minute I said, ‘Let me get out of my shell,’” Stephanie Maldonado said. After a second audition with USPS via Zoom, she got an email asking her to come to Los Angeles.

“By the way, you’ll be in the lead role,” they told her.

Maldonado played a working mom who delivers the mail and then comes home to her children. The production staff put the novice actor at ease. “I told them I was nervous, but they said, ‘Don’t worry, we’ll walk you through it.’ They were very patient.”

“I tell everyone it was a good experience,” she added. “Do it, even if you’re scared.”

Yvette Legette thought she would be scared too. The Bergen County Merged, NJ Branch 425 carrier, who recently retired after carrying the mail since 1985, has appeared in several video and print ads after USPS brought her to Los Angeles to shoot an ad in 2022.

“I thought I was going to be nervous,” she said. But the production crew was so accommodating that she relaxed immediately. “Everybody was so friendly, from the producers to the writers to the crew,” Legette said.

“Everybody knew my name. They even asked me for input.” She showed them how and when carriers use scanners, for instance, to ensure that the ad was as authentic as possible.

“It was so exciting—I didn’t know it was going to be a whole production,” she added. From the chauffeur to the fancy hotel to the food, “I felt like a movie star.”

USPS ended up using her in several video and print ads, including ads in magazines like *Sports Illustrated* and mailers that are sent directly to postal customers.

Legette liked the work so much that she asked the production staff about how to get into the acting business, and they gave her some resources to get more jobs. She has appeared in spots for other advertisers beyond USPS and has a role in an upcoming documentary film. She’s looking at doing voice work as well.

“It’s my retirement career,” she said.

At 23, **James Urry** is far from retirement, but he already is showing his distinctive face in postal ads.

“I tell people that my mustache is ‘postal famous,’” said the San Bernardino, CA Branch 411 member who started carrying the mail in 2020.

Thanks to his appealing mustache,

Urry bagged a role in a postal ad in January 2022 at the last minute, when two other carriers tested positive for COVID-19 and couldn’t make it. To prepare in time to make it to his Marine Corps Reserve duties the following weekend, Urry rushed out the door and drove a few hours to Los Angeles, arriving at the hotel in shabby clothes as glamorous models paraded at an event in the ballroom.

But he brushed it off and jumped right into the role. Urry spent a few hours driving an LLV on a highway as a film crew sat behind him taking video. He also posed with a prototype of the next generation delivery vehicle (NGDV), though he didn’t drive it because it had no engine yet.

After a week of shooting the ad, Urry went straight to Camp Pendleton for his reserve service. He and his mustache appeared soon after in the Postal Service’s “We Go Everywhere” ad.

“It was a different experience” working on a set with video producers, he said. “As postal workers, we’re used to just doing our jobs—but they were calling us ‘talent.’”

But in other ways, he said, working on a video production set was similar to his postal and military service: “I’m used to the ‘hurry up and wait’ mentality.”

USPS accepts casting applications from postal employees throughout the year. Postal employees can apply online at mrm-usps.powerappsportals.com. Applicants must upload a head shot and a video—instructions for what to say and do in the video are at the site. **PR**



James Urry