

Postal Woes

continued from page 1

mote areas.

The USPS *Delivering for America* plan, a 10-year modernization effort, has significantly impacted newspapers through increased postage rates (over 40% since 2023) and slower, inconsistent delivery times, with roughly 20% of periodicals (newspapers) delivered late in late 2025. These changes have caused widespread delivery delays, particularly for local and weekly papers in rural areas.

While the plan aims to improve the long-term financial health of the Postal Service, it has creating a crisis for many small, independent publishers who rely on the USPS.

I'm doing my best, and will keep you posted on what may change on my end.

For now, prices go up and "service" goes down.

LITTLE LEARNERS PRESCHOOL PROFILE

Rania Sawahreh

Name: Rania Sawahreh

Family: Dad Jordan, mom Emily, brother Elias.

Favorite Book: "I Don't Know".

Favorite Color: Pink.

Favorite Movie / Show: "Paw Patrol".

Hobbies: Puzzles.



What do you think will be the best part of kindergarten? Playing at recess.

What was the best part of preschool? Barbie houses.

What is your advice to younger preschool kids? Be good, follow the rules.

What do you want to be when you grow up? A princess.

"Call Before You Dig"

The North Dakota Public Service Commission (PSC) is reminding everyone of the potential dangers and consequences of digging without first clicking or calling 8-1-1, North Dakota's Call Before You Dig number.

"Spring has arrived, and with it comes a surge of outdoor projects. Before any digging begins, the North Dakota Public Service Commission has an essential reminder: always call 811 first," said Commissioner Sheri Haugen-Hoffart, who oversees the damage prevention portfolio. "This simple step is one of the most effective ways to prevent dangerous and costly accidents. Underground utility lines – whether gas, electric, communications, water, or sewer – are closer to the surface than many people realize. Striking one can create serious safety hazards and contributes to billions of dollars in damages each year. By making a quick call to 811, you're protecting yourself, your property, and your community. Safe digging starts with knowing what's below – don't take the risk."

North Dakota law requires anyone conducting an excavation to notify 811 at least two business days in advance of digging. This is

a free service to homeowners and farmers working on their own property/land. Personnel will be sent to mark the locations of the underground facilities, typically within a couple of days. The markings are valid for 21 days after they are placed as identified on your excavation notice ticket. This process is coordinated through North Dakota One Call. The PSC's role is to enforce the requirements of the state's damage prevention laws and act when violations are reported to the Commission. The PSC can levy a fine up to \$25,000 per violation depending on severity.

Each year North Dakota's underground utility infrastructure is jeopardized by unintentional damage from those who fail to call 811 to have underground facilities located prior to digging. Since 2009, the PSC has received and processed 384 complaints related to violations of the Call-Before-You-Dig law. In total, approximately \$473,000 in fines have been assessed against companies or individuals who have violated the law. The consequences of striking an underground utility can be severe including explosions resulting in injury or death, service interrup-

tions or damage to the environment.

The significant residential and business growth occurring throughout North Dakota and the increased demand for pipeline infrastructure to support the energy industry have dramatically increased demand for the One-Call Program.

For more information about 8-1-1 and begin your excavation notice, visit the North Dakota One-Call Board's website at www.ndonecall.com. For safety tips, best practices and other information, visit the Common Ground Alliance website at www.commongroundalliance.com.

The North Dakota Public Service Commission is a constitutionally created state agency with authority to permit, site and regulate certain business activities in the state including electric and gas utilities, telecommunications companies, power plants, electric transmission lines, pipelines, railroads, commercial weighing devices, pipeline safety and coal mine reclamation. For more information, contact the Public Service Commission at (701) 328-2400 or www.psc.nd.gov.

SLICES OF LIFE

BY JILL PERTLER

Squeezing the last bit from the bottle

Most of us enjoy ketchup on our burgers and fries. I know I do. But I never realized ketchup might be a metaphor for a life well lived.

I never wanted to grow older. I avoided it at all costs. I disliked turning 30 and then 40 and so on.

Now I realize that was all pretty silly.

You can't stop time. The years move on, and with them so does the number that defines your age.

You can spend your 36th year wishing you were still 35, but that accomplishes nothing.

Why aspire to something that can never be again? Better put, why waste time on such things, when time is so very, very precious?

If you are 36, the only thing you can realistically aspire to is being the best 36 and possibly the best 37 you can be. Nothing more. Nothing less.

And that is enough.

It is brilliant and realistic and perfect.

If only we'd recognize these truths at 29, or 39 or even 49.

Instead, we all want to be young. Forever. At least I did.

I aspired to the whole youngness theory for decades. I believed my numerical age defined me, and I attempted to run from it.

I've never been a good runner.

Then I moved to a community dominated by retirees and I witnessed their strength and resilience and vigor and vitality. It doesn't matter if you are 55 or 85, everyone in my neighborhood seems to subscribe to the same philosophy: live life to the fullest.

It has been eye-opening.

These people who remember a life filled with the realities of the Viet Nam War, moon landings, and the black and white versions of *Leave it to Beaver*, *I Love Lucy* and *Alfred Hitchcock* movies are still living out a joyful and action-packed life every hour of every day, and I couldn't be more inspired.

But back to ketchup.

Most of us have experienced a ketchup bottle that is no longer full, in fact, by most standards, it might be described as nearly empty. But, empty or full is irrelevant because those last bits of ketchup taste just as rich and just as satisfying as the first ones out of the bottle.

Maybe even more so, because when you understand your ketch-

up bottle no longer holds an unlimited amount of the good red sauce, you savor what is left. You appreciate every drop and you make sure none of it goes to waste. You become intent on squeezing every last bit of ketchup from the bottle.

And that perfectly describes so many people I've recently had the pleasure of calling friends. They may not have a lifetime ahead of them, but they are enjoying and savoring every moment, every day.

They are playing sports. They are playing cards. They are volunteering at the food shelf. They are sitting beside the pool. They are swimming laps. They are writing poetry. They are fostering abandoned pets. They are creating art. They are acting with the local theater group. They are pursuing lifelong hobbies. They are finding new life passions. They are living and they are loving it.

They are incredible.

Age is only a number. We've all heard this time and time again. Still, we tend to battle against that number. I've learned the hard way that numbers are inconsequential.

My husband died at 56. It was his number.

I play sports with people who are 85 and they are still going strong. They haven't yet come upon their number.

My takeaway from all of this? Quit worrying about the numbers. We all are like a bottle of ketchup. We don't know when our tomato saucy sauce will run out, but we might as well have fun during the run.

I am honored to know quite a few people who are living this out loud, and I love that I am able to see it up close and personal.

I never wanted to get older. I didn't think there was anything good to be said about it.

Now I know I was wrong. Living in maturity is awesome, as long as you keep on living - really living - every day, understanding the importance of squeezing every last bit of ketchup out of your bottle.

Which I now do. Most certainly. Every single day. Until I can't anymore.

We should all be so fortunate.

Jill Pertler is an award-winning syndicated columnist, published playwright and author. Don't miss a slice; follow the Slices of Life page on Facebook.