

Postmaster says computers biggest change

By **BRANDY LEROUX**

bleroux@nwkansas.com

Karen Vogt has been the postmaster in Almena for the last three years. However, she has worked for the United States Postal Service for 24 years, and has been a postmaster for 15.

"Almena is the the biggest post office I've worked in since becoming a postmaster," said Mrs. Vogt. "I was a postmaster at Prairie View for five years, then in Jennings for eight."

She started out as a part-time/fill clerk in Stockton. Since it is a small post office, she was the only clerk. She learned the administrative side of working in a post office and filled in as postmaster when her boss needed her to.

The biggest difference she has seen since she started working at the post office has been the computers.

"We do more and more on the computers now," said Mrs. Vogt. "Our accounting is done online, the administrative work, and it all goes to a database for the postal service."

Mrs. Vogt said one of the things she thinks is really helpful to people is that they can go online to www.usps.com and find zip codes, rates, help with e-Bay shipping, and even request that their mail be held. She said the list for holding mail is checked every day, whether anyone has requested a hold on their mail or not.

But don't think that just because it's a small town, small post office that the work is easy.

"The Almena Post Office is just like a larger city's, but on a smaller scale," she said. "I think we have about 95 percent of the same services as a post office in Kansas City. Putting mail in boxes and selling stamps is a small part of our job. Mostly it's the administrative work and documentation, but there are very strict rules and regulations that must be followed. We can't just say 'Oh, close enough.'"

Of course, the major changes came after the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks.

"We have to wear issued identification badges when we're working, everything has to be kept locked, aviation security became a whole lot stricter, and if anything weighs over 15 ounces, it has to be mailed through the window so we can see the person face-to-face," said Mrs. Vogt.

And if you're wondering what happens to undeliverable mail, it goes to one of the two

Mail Recovery Centers, in either St. Paul or Atlanta, where a court order is required to open the mail to see if a name or address can be found to mail it to. For example, if a person is mailing a credit card bill payment, and the address it's going to isn't in the envelope's window, it goes

to the Mail Recovery Center. After it's opened and if an address is found, say on a check, it will be returned to the sender, which means a late credit-card payment.

According to the postal service's website, in 2004 the Mail Recovery Centers processed

about 1.3 million parcels and 73.1 million letters — and were able to return only 6.1 million pieces of mail to their rightful owners. The Mail Recovery Center in Atlanta holds auctions about once a month for parcels that a return address isn't found for.



Karen Vogt, postmaster of the Almena Post Office, used the cancel machine at the post office. The machine cancels the stamps so they can't be reused.

- Telegram photo by Brandy Leroux

THANKS
for
All You Do
Ladies!!



211 W. Holme, Norton
PH 785-877-2773



Front row, from left, Denise Remington, Rachele Davis, Katie Ryan, Shaylyn Boteler, Back row: Vicki Leonard, Dusty Ulmer, Vicki Henderson

Saluting the
Norton County
Working
Women

Tammy Johnson

Smoky Hill Foundation 213 South Kansas, Suite 1, Norton, KS
For Chemical Dependency, Inc. Phone: 785-877-3068

