FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
April 30, 2013

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St. Louis Post Office Offers Tips On Dog Bite Prevention
Advises on how to avoid being bitten and be a responsible dog owner

ST LOUIS — A dog might be a man’s best friend, but for people working and playing outdoors, a dog on the loose can be potentially dangerous.

“That’s why we need to deliver an important message about responsible pet ownership,” said St Louis Postmaster Cathy Vaughn. “Several of our letter carriers know first-hand about the pain of animal attacks and we want to help educate the community — especially pet owners.”

More than 4.5 million people are bitten annually by dogs. Last year, nearly 5,600 letter carriers were bitten by dogs across the country. In the St Louis Metropolitan Area, there have been 38 dog incidents in the past 12 months. These numbers pale in comparison to the more than 2 million children who received dog bite injuries in a single year.

The American Veterinary Medical Association (AVMA) and the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) report that small children, the elderly, and letter carriers, in that order, are the most frequent victims of dog bites. Children are the majority of victims and are 900 times more likely to be bitten than letter carriers.

“Dog attacks are the most commonly reported childhood public health problem in the United States,” adds Vaughn. “Dog bite victims account for up to 5 percent of emergency room visits.”

The following tips will help people avoid being bitten by a dog and offer advice on how to be a responsible dog owner.

How to Avoid Being Bitten

- Don’t run past a dog. The dog’s natural instinct is to chase and catch you. If a dog threatens you, don’t scream. Avoid eye contact. Try to remain motionless until the dog leaves, and then back away slowly until the dog is out of sight.

- Don’t approach a strange dog, especially one that’s tethered or confined.

- While letter carriers are discouraged from petting animals, people who choose to pet dogs should always let a dog see and sniff them before petting the animal.

- If you believe a dog is about to attack you, try to place something between yourself and the dog, such as a backpack or a bicycle.

How to Be a Responsible Dog Owner

- Obedience training can teach dogs proper behavior and help owners control their dog in any situation.

- When the letter carrier comes to your home, keep your dog inside, away from the door, in another room, or on a leash.

- Dogs can be protective of their territory and may interpret the actions of letter carriers as a threat.
• Please take precautions when accepting mail in the presence of your pet.

• Spay or neuter your dog. Neutered dogs are less likely to bite. Humane Society of the United States (HSUS) statistics reflect that dogs that have not been spayed or neutered are up to three times more likely to be involved in a biting incident than neutered or spayed dogs.

• Dogs that haven’t been properly socialized, receive little attention or handling, or are left tied up for long periods of time frequently turn into biters.

The Postal Service receives no tax dollars for operating expenses and relies on the sale of postage, products and services to fund its operations.

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