

COLRAIN

U.S. Postal Service thanks country store with giant stamp



STAFF PHOTO/PAUL FRANZ

Colrain Postmaster Mandy Richtell, right, presents Catamount Country Store owner Laurie Giard with framed artwork of the "Thank You" Forever stamp on Wednesday for staying open for Colrain residents during the COVID-19 pandemic.

By ELLA ADAMS
For the Recorder

COLRAIN — In recognition of Catamount Country Store's "instrumental" contribution to Colrain by staying open during the pandemic, owner Laurie Giard was presented with an unexpected thank you this week, in the form of a giant United States Postal Service Forever "Thank You" stamp and a framed placard.

"2020 was a year like no other. Due to the COVID-19 outbreak, our lives changed," Colrain Postmaster Mandy Richtell said to the small crowd of guests packed into the store on Wednesday. "Concern for one another was at an all-time high, and 'essential workers' became heroes.

"USPS understands what it means to be 'essential' — to show up when nobody else does, to put first an extra effort to ensure that a need is met," Richtell continued. "We would like to take this time to ac-

knowledge the extra effort that Catamount Country Store gave when it was needed."

Richtell continued, naming the store's service as a gas station, convenience store and restaurant as "instrumental" in helping Colrain during the pandemic shutdown. Despite facing challenges in obtaining supplies, and in addition to her work as a nurse, Giard kept the store open for the benefit of those around her.

"Through the pandemic, she would come in to conduct business," Richtell recalled of Giard's visits to the Post Office. She was in awe of everything Giard was constantly doing, from providing customers with a supply request sheet to buying a new credit card reader so postal staff could use their gas cards at her store.

"I jumped on the chance to show her how appreciative the community is," Richtell said. "In a really small town, without this store there wouldn't be a ton here."



STAFF PHOTO/PAUL FRANZ

Catamount Country Store owner Laurie Giard is flanked by Robert Leary, manager of post office operations, and Mandy Richtell, Colrain postmaster, while holding framed artwork of the "Thank You" Forever stamp presented to her Wednesday for staying open for Colrain residents during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The "Thank You" stamp shows appreciation for the small, local businesses that stayed open throughout the pandemic, said Anna Robinson, USPS secretary for mar-

keting for the Massachusetts and Rhode Island district. Highlighted in gold foil and in cursive script with a floral de-

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sign, “Thank You” stamp designer and lettering artist Dana Tanamachi is responsible for its creation. It was released on Aug. 21 of last year.

According to Robinson, businesses like Catamount Country Store were integral in supporting their communities through this time.

“We’re going around to different post offices in the region to show that we’re appreciative of more mom-and-pop places,” Robinson explained. “The places that helped the smaller towns (get through the pandemic).”

“I was very surprised and thankful and appreciative that they recognized us,” Giard said of USPS.

Giard spoke of the frustration she occasionally felt due to the endless nature of pandemic-related work, but also of the desire and need she felt to provide for her community. Since her store is smaller than many stores around the region, Giard had to put in extra work to keep items on the shelves and use her resources. She recalled doing everything she could to make sure even those who weren’t physically comfortable coming into the store could still make use of everything the store provides.

“It was tiring, and it was hard to get staff,” Giard said of her experience running Catamount Country Store through the pandemic. Nonetheless, she didn’t hesitate to add, “we made it through!”